

# IN THESE TIMES

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VOL. 7, NO. 28

JUNE 29-JULY 12, 1983

\$1.25

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# THE INSIDE STORY



President Francois Mitterrand's weapons policy is stifling the attempt to guide production to human needs.

## Nuclear disease begs for autogestion cure

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

Spotting trends is one way people try to get their bearings in the rush of time. Several years ago the German Social Democrats were able to speak of "comrade Trend" marching with them. Even mainstream American observers were perceiving a trend to socialism in Europe. More recently, election results suggested a trend toward throwing out whoever happens to be in office.

But the landslide re-election of Margaret Thatcher in Britain reverses that trend. Now Europe is thought to be overwhelmingly to the right. Thatcher did little to provide work for three million jobless Britons, but she gave the whole nation a lovely little victorious war in the Falkland Islands. The lesson seems to be that leaders can gain popularity by acting tough, in particular by winning a war in southern seas—a dangerous illusion in hard times.

Trends generate countertrends, so often by the time an idea is generally accepted it has lost its punch. A trend is a description of a current mood, not a prophecy. The current lemming-like mood in Europe may turn around tomorrow. Nevertheless, it hangs heavy today.

The feeling of a rightward trend is currently being promoted and exploited in France to undermine the authority of President Francois Mitterrand. After two years in office, public opinion polls show Mitterrand's support at a dangerously low 33 percent, and right propagandists are spreading the word that he will not be able to serve out his seven-year term. Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac, yearning for his turn in the Elysee, has suggested a method for getting Mitterrand out: the president should call a national referendum on economic policy, Chirac says, and then if the result is unfavorable, he should draw the conclusion that he has lost public confidence and resign. There is a precedent since this is how De Gaulle left the presidency in 1969, a year after his rule was shaken by the events of May 1968.

In fact, France's economic situation is not—or at least not yet—noticeably worse than any other nation's, nor are the present government's economic policies not-

iceably different. But a climate of non-confidence has been created—to some extent by the government's own vacillations, but perhaps even more by the implacable hostility of the moneyed classes to anything that calls itself "socialist." The "people of the left" are disappointed in the government and are lapsing into fatalism. Meanwhile, the government's enemies are much more active than its supporters, creating a relationship of forces that is threatening to the government.

The right is ideologically motivated to defeat Mitterrand's government so it can proclaim socialism a failure. It appears that this is widely believed, although what is wrong with this government has little to do with socialism. Thus, in order to defend socialism's prospects in general, it is politically necessary to venture a diagnosis of the malady crippling the French left.

It seems to me the left's fatal flaw is its acceptance—one can even say its enthusiastic acceptance—of nuclear weapons. Yet I believe this assertion would be hotly contested by most people here. Even those who have misgivings about Mitterrand's weapons policy would tend to consider nuclear armament only a venial sin in a medium-sized country like France, which is merely trying to defend itself against bigger and badder powers. Nuclear weapons are considered a secondary issue—a technical question of little political or social import.

This support for nuclear weapons is the most disastrous aspect of the French left's anachronistic policies. Another and far more criticized aspect is its attitude, at least up until quite recently, toward economic growth. Having long pinned its programs to economic growth, the French left elected to office two years ago was ill-prepared to deal with stubborn recession, falling back on classic deflationary policies. But its errors are now being wildly exaggerated by its adversaries since it has been blundering along neither more nor less ineffectually than any conservative government.

The more serious setback in the economic sphere is the government's failure to involve workers in transforming the productive apparatus by defining social needs and directing investment to fulfill those needs. Of course this vast project would require new forms of democracy to involve people at all levels in creating a new type of market that could circumvent world market forces that are increasingly based on a destructive search for profit. This is what many people thought was more or less meant by "autogestion," which French intellectuals used to talk about so often.

In fact, absolutely nothing has been done under the Socialist government to create *socialisme autogestionnaire* in France. Even the word "autogestion" is dropping out of usage.

### Nuclear taboo.

Many explanations may be offered, but I want to underline this point: it is impossible in the early '80s to attempt seriously to guide production toward human needs without challenging nuclear weapons production. Yet this is a taboo subject in France. The left government parties, Socialist and Communist, whether out of conviction or expediency, have committed themselves to maintaining—even expanding—France's nuclear arms program, as well as helping suppress any critical debate on the issue. Under these conditions, any genuine democratic debate to define human needs and relate them to choices about what is produced is out of the question. Instead, people are exhorted to tighten their belts to help France improve its trade position on the world market. And the world market decides what is

produced in France. Included in its shopping list are lots of weapons and the various components of the emerging plutonium economy.

For this sad state of affairs, no doubt the blame falls first on Mitterrand, on the Socialist and Communist parties, but also on the whole French political culture that tends to look for social salvation through forms of power: the state and technology.

### Quantity vs. quality.

Holding back quantitative demands, unions supporting the government have instead tried to raise qualitative demands that fall far short of interference in investment or production choices. Even the nationalized industries are entirely run according to the profit criteria. On the one hand, the Communist-led General Confederation of Labor (CGT) has been trying to carve out a "qualitative" role as a more efficient industrial manager than capitalism, on the ideological grounds that workers care more about preserving the productive apparatus than capitalists do. True or not, results have not been noticeable. On the other hand, the French Democratic Labor Confederation (CFDT) is more closely identified with autogestion, yet it has limited its demands for worker control to questions of working conditions. Neither approach has aroused worker interest nor stemmed the dropout of union members—perhaps because detecting management "waste" is too technocratic and complaining about the kind of soap in the lavatory is too trivial to sustain an active popular movement. With no inspiring goals, even "revolutionary" working people are lapsing into apathy.

Today, criticism of the arms race is the first step toward public intervention in productive investment. But "pacifism" is anathema to the Mitterrand government. Instead, the stifling of German pacifism seems to be its primary foreign policy goal. France is now the prime mover in the opening European arms race. By refusing to let its nuclear weapons be taken into account in the Geneva talks on Eurostrategic nuclear weapons, France seems to be assuring that the U.S. Pershing 2 and Cruise missiles will be deployed in five NATO countries.

France is encouraging nuclear proliferation, pointing with pride to the fact that possession of their own atomic weapons has preserved the French people from the plague of pacifism. The way things are going, it will not be long before the German right takes full advantage of this lesson to outstrip the French nuclear capability—with complacent French collaboration.

The French left seems unwittingly to be leading Europe down the road to the nuclear arms race, with all its implications for the militarization of society, the waste of resources, the dangers to the environment and the further impoverishment of peoples, not to mention the growing danger of nuclear war. The countertrends are probably there, but for the moment they're hard to see.

## Making changes

*In These Times* has a new business manager, Ruth Greenspan, who replaces controller Bruce Kaplan. Ruth comes to *ITT* from Madison, Wisc., where for seven years she managed Gilman Street Books, an alternative bookstore and resource center.

(ISSN 0160-5992)

## IN THESE TIMES

The Independent Socialist Newspaper

Published 42 times a year: weekly except the first week of January, first week of March, last week of November, last week of December; bi-weekly in June, July and August by Institute for Public Affairs, 1300 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60657, (312) 472-5700.

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## IN THESE TIMES

By David Moberg

**"H**OUSTON IS KIND OF the caboose on the economy," Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union leader Joe Campbell said as he sat in his office near the Houston Ship Canal, a typically Texan solution for an inland city that wanted to be a port. "It was the last to come into the recession, and it will be the last to come out."

It was a shock to Houstonians that they were even the caboose. Who thought they were part of a recession train? Although there had been moments when it seemed like the boom was going to flatten out a little, Houston had basically never suffered hard times since the '20s, even riding out the Great Depression with unemployment rates that would be enviable anywhere now.

But this spring the official unemployment rate reached 9.9 percent in Houston—where many undocumented Mexican workers and uncouned exiles from the North swell the unofficial jobless rolls. That was triple the rate a year ago.

It's beginning to sound a lot like the Frostbelt: hundreds of job seekers crowded the Post Office in response to a misleading ad....the city government is planning to lay off up to 400 workers in an austerity move as tax revenues drop and the bond rating slips....bankruptcies reached record levels last year, up 59 percent from 1981....there's a wide-open market in used industrial space, thanks to numerous plant closings....businesses are planning to shift work overseas or to lower-wage areas of the U.S. if they recover....and the "rig count," the tally of the number of actively drilling rotary oil rigs that represents for Houston what the running tally of cars on the freeway Good-year sign represents for Detroit, is down by 46 percent from a year ago.

The rig count is key to Campbell's pessimism and the catalog of local ills. Most economists estimate that the energy sector makes up about 35 percent of the Houston area economy, with far more indirectly dependent. Oil drew people to this muggy one-time swamp that originated in a land scam aimed at gullible Easterners and has grown at an average 3.6 percent annually since 1900.

"What else would anybody want to do in Houston?" asks University of Houston economics professor Louis H. Stern, who is now updating a comprehensive city survey he made over a decade ago.

In the '20s and '30s, Stern says, petroleum refining drove Houston's growth as the auto boom guaranteed refinery activity. In the '50s and '60s, the chemical industry provided new momentum. But by the mid-'60s, refinery automation was re-



Gordon W. Gahan

money into Houston real estate.

When the worldwide recession took hold, an oil glut eventually developed. With prices stabilized or falling, there was no incentive to drill. Unlike past periods when gasoline or petrochemical demand sustained Houston through a national downturn, this time the new wealth of the city was tied to capital goods production, which took a dramatic tumble.

Even with a recovery, oil prices will probably remain stable as desperate foreign oil producers raise production to pay off debts. Thus there will be little market for the bits, rigs and pumps from Houston.

To top it all off, the building boom also seems ready to go bust. The office vacancy rate is now 19 percent, but with office space under construction equal to one-fourth of all that currently exists, forecasts of 30 percent vacancy in the near future seem realistic. There is a comparable glut of condominiums and apartments as well.

"While Houston was living on petroleum refiners and petrochemicals, it was living beautifully and was isolated from changes in the rest of the country and the rest of the world," Stern said. "Houston saw itself as the town of dynamic entrepreneurs, but they were just sitting in a very nice spot. This is the most serious setback for Houston since 1920."

Getting set back in Houston is particularly hard. Unemployment compensation averages \$92 a week (the maximum is \$147), one of the lowest in the nation. The fund is in deep trouble, and in 1982, just as layoffs climbed, the state shut down several unemployment claims offices in Houston. Texas welfare payments (AFDC) rank 49th in the country (the state legislature, pleading poverty as oil tax receipts drop, raised payments only \$5 a month in the last session).

Landlords can easily evict tenants, and often do: many of the homeless who camped out in the Tent Cities on the outskirts of Houston last year were not only poor autoworkers and steelworkers from Michigan and Ohio, but also unemployed Houstonians. But the city didn't take kindly to such overt reminders of how hard hard times could be here. The encampments were recently cleared away by fire marshals, and a state law prohibited overnight camping.

Economic troubles may have helped elect a moderate-to-liberal new state administration last fall, but along with irritation at her style, the economy could threaten Houston Mayor Kathryn Whitmire's re-election bid this fall. Her former campaign finance chairman is challenging the moderate Democrat, charging in part that she's not sufficiently pro-business (an accusation that's hard to believe in a city and state with no income tax,

low property taxes, lax workers' safety protection, a nearly non-existent "social safety net" and few business regulations).

Along with resentment at downtown business domination and a commitment to cars, the economy may have also played a role in Houstonians' defeat in early June of a bond issue to start building a mass transit system for this city of perpetually jammed freeways. (Everything terrible predicted for Los Angeles many years ago, locals lament, actually came true in Houston.)

Polls as well as conversations convey a new fear and pessimism: in early 1982, 40 percent of Houstonians saw their city as an excellent place to find a job. By early this year the figure dropped to one in 10.

But workers on the job are feeling the effects, too, along with the few unions that have found a niche here. During the boom unionization failed to keep pace, and Texas dropped to 48th place in the country, with only 11.4 percent of its non-farm workforce organized in 1980.

### Houston Organizing Project.

In response to requests from the local la-  
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Gordon W. Gahan

# Houston: it's beginning to look a lot like the Frostbelt

cluding employment. Plastics and chemical production was reaching maturity and facing competition from other regions as Texas oil production declined in the face of cheap oil imports. Even the NASA space center appeared unlikely to keep Houston booming. But OPEC did.

Soaring oil prices after 1973 encouraged new drilling in Texas and throughout the world. Houston's suppliers of oil-field equipment reaped the bounty as they manufactured roughly 60 percent of the U.S. oilfield capital goods and perhaps 40 percent of the world's needs for drill bits, pumps, valves, offshore rigs and similar equipment.

Dozens of small to medium-sized producers sprouted up to serve a bottlenecked supply line. At the same time, numerous corporate giants either expanded in Houston or relocated their headquarters, stimulating the haphazard and unzoned eruption of skyscrapers in downtown

Houston, and even giving rise to multiple, competing downtowns. Such growth fed the housing market—for several years the national leader—that comprised 10 percent of all U.S. housing starts last year.

With the growth in skilled manufacturing jobs and the surge in managerial, technical and professional employment, Houston grew rich. From 1970 to 1980 it was the third fastest-growing major metropolitan area in the country, rising from 13th place to 8th. During roughly the same period, it rose from 22nd to 3rd place in per capita income. With wage levels up, Houston is now less attractive than the nearby lower Rio Grande Valley for assembly line factories.

The boom—as well as the area's large medical center—attracted newly oil-rich Latin Americans from Mexico and Venezuela, who along with other foreigners seeking a haven for their gains poured

Even the building boom seems ready to go bust. Office vacancy rates are 20 percent.



## Of moles and Moon

Are defense industry workers would-be whistleblowers or potential Soviet moles? The conservative *Washington Times*, the newspaper founded last year with Rev. Sun Myung Moon's financial backing, is attacking American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) president Kenneth Blaylock for suggesting that AFGE members in defense plants keep the union informed about cost overruns and contracting fraud they witness. Blaylock, who co-chairs the AFL-CIO's defense budget subcommittee, told an AFGE executive council meeting last year that union members could help the subcommittee scrutinize waste in the military. "Lane [Kirkland] knows that our people work in these defense activities and we probably are the best conduit for actual information," Blaylock said, suggesting the union "set up a system inside where we're actually going out to our [Defense Department] locals and requesting that kind of information...to begin to challenge this wide open defense budget that nobody seems willing to challenge."

The *Times* featured Blaylock's statement as a call to treason, alleging that the union leader was suggesting AFGE members divulge classified information. A *Times* cartoon smirked, "If AFGE talks, the KGB listens," and an editorial headlined "Pentagon moles" warned that "the Soviets couldn't at any price construct a network of moles to equal AFGE's presence at Defense." Blaylock denied requesting classified information and said his remarks were meant "to encourage workers at [defense] installations to use their whistleblower rights that are protected by law." The Moon-backed paper published a series of articles, based on leaked AFGE documents, that criticized the federal employees union, and they've been picked up by AFGE enemies—Office of Personnel Management director Donald Devine has been quoting them extensively in his efforts to promote federal work rule changes.

## Disarmament disagreements

Tension between defense workers and the peace movement over a Burlington, Vt., Disarmament Day demonstration earlier this month threatened to split the left coalition behind Mayor Bernard Sanders. Sanders surprised his peace movement supporters by opposing their plans to blockade a General Electric defense plant June 20, arguing that the demonstration would hurt not GE but the plant's union workers, who had no control over what they built anyway. In the end Sanders met with union leaders and blockade organizers to discuss their differences and reach some kind of understanding—if only an agreement to disagree on peace movement tactics—and the June 20 demonstration went peacefully, with no conflict between workers and demonstrators. "It's difficult to put together the coalition you want—it requires a lot of sensitivity to workers' concerns," Sanders told *In These Times*.

## War to the last drop

Signs bearing the familiar blue can of Maxwell House coffee with its "good to the last drop" logo greeted employees and motorists recently at 28 General Foods facilities around the world. But the drop was blood-red and the message said, "Make this your last drop." The signs, Michael McConnell reports, were part of a new international campaign to stop General Foods—world's largest coffee seller—from buying coffee from El Salvador and Guatemala because of those government's human rights violations. Vigils were held in Canada, the U.S. and Japan to protest General Foods' purchase of "bloody coffee."

The Salvadoran coffee market is nationalized, and in 1980 \$268 million helped the government finance the war. In Guatemala, a steep coffee export tax nets the government more than one-third of the revenues from its sale, bringing in \$155 million in 1980. Organizers hope the campaign matches the successful protest that stopped Western Airlines from flying deportees back to El Salvador last year.

## Firsts in peace

At Fisk University's June conference on the Arms Race vs. Human Needs there were several "firsts," reports Anna Gyorgy of Critical Mass. It was the first peace conference organized by a black college, and it represented an unprecedented gathering of white and Third World networks that have not often found common ground. UN expert and African scholar Prexy Nesbitt told the 225 participants the last time he saw that mix of people was at an illegal meeting in South Africa, where trade unionists, the African National Congress and white supporters met to discuss their "separate struggles." Topics ranged from working with street gangs in Los Angeles, tying the arms race to community battles for housing, jobs and schools, and the difficulties of black-white political coalitions when whites won't accept black leadership. The August 27 March on Washington, Jobs with Peace campaign, the Congressional Black Caucus military budget and increased action on South Africa generated the most enthusiasm for cooperation.

—Joan Walsh



## Media keeps peace on MX

SANTA BARBARA, CALIF.—Something was missing from most of the nation's press June 16 and 17 and it was a big story—news of the MX missile's scheduled test launch and the secrecy under which the Air Force was conducting it. National media kept silent

on the test plans in exchange for access to the launch, but the bargain meant the story amounted to glorious photos of the controversial test, and little else.

Vandenberg Air Force Base officials called news agencies Thursday morning with news of the first MX test, but would only share the exact date and time upon agreement to embargo the information until the launch happened. Those who kept mum on the obvious news event would be allowed to view it from the base. Those who broke the embargo would be excluded.

There had been rumors of an impending test for several days—MX opponents independently called news agencies to inform them that it would happen Friday between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. But only three reporters, one local and two from Los Angeles, broke the embargo and reported the test plan, and they were excluded from the launch. News of the Air Force's announcement and the attendant secrecy was, for the most part, withheld from the public until late Friday. Some papers reported the rumors of the launch, but didn't note that they knew the rumors to be true.

Why the secrecy? The Air Force said it wanted to keep the Soviets in the dark, but officials admitted that the Russians in fact had been informed of the test. As the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*

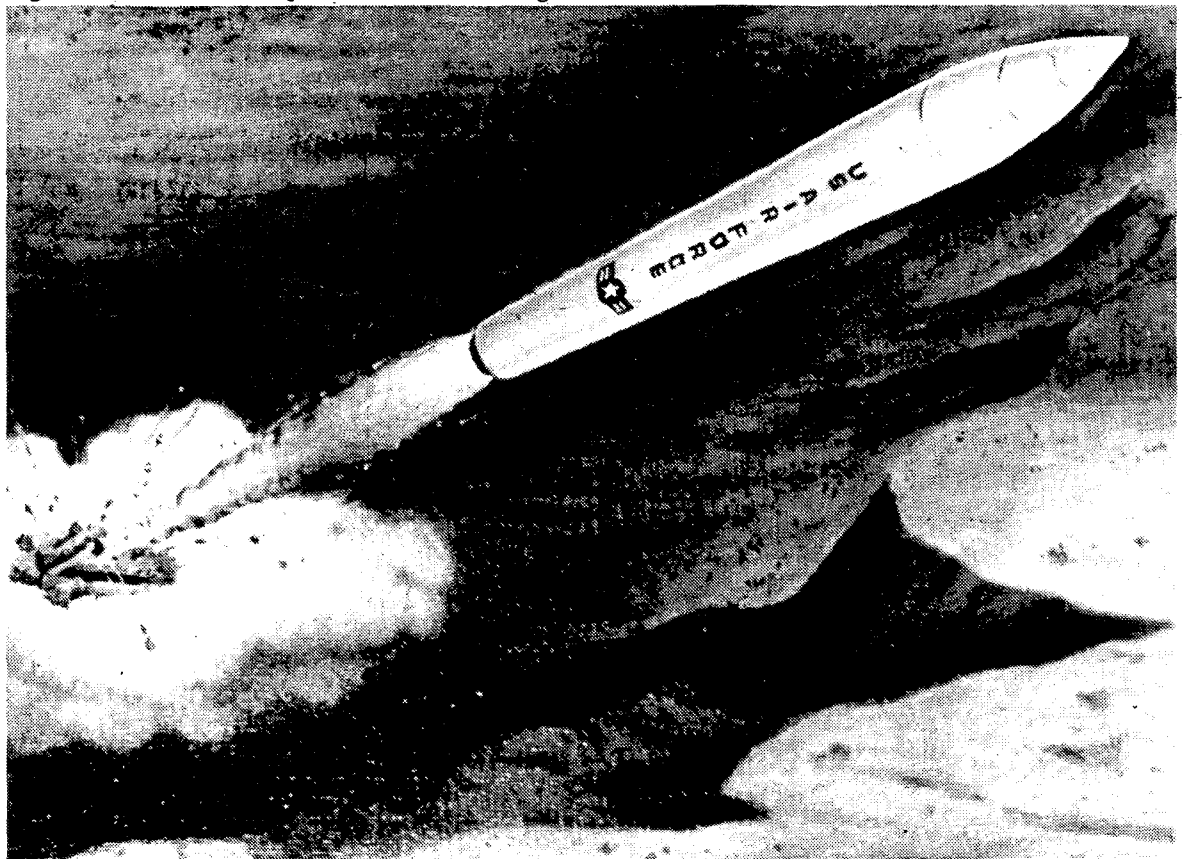
reported, Air Force officials "left no doubt" the secrecy was prompted by fear of disruption from demonstrators.

The embargo worked. The 100 or so journalists on the base to cover the event outnumbered the people there to protest it. Previous, well-publicized protests at the base had drawn thousands.

In return for their silence, journalists got some spectacular pictures of the launch, which was delayed until Friday evening—but that's all they got. The three television networks reported the test well into their Saturday evening news after stories on the Pope's visit to Poland and the virtually (and perhaps intentionally) concurrent launching of the space shuttle. Only CBS reported the embargo. None reported that peace activist Daniel Ellsberg was among the 16 people arrested protesting the launch.

"The general public has no idea of how media policy is made, and this is a real big example of media manipulation," said one employee of an area television station that agreed to the embargo. "The media wanted to know what time to get there so they could set up their equipment and get the best possible vantage. So the whole United States got a chance to watch the Pentagon jerk off in complete glory, and that's the only story they got."

—William Swislow



The post-MX test coverage echoed the military's views that the missile launch was "magnificent."

## Airline jobs no bargain

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Darlene Foster arrived at Newark International Airport last January for the morning shift at the People Express reservation center, where she had worked for almost two years. Outside her office, she was stopped by a man who asked for her name and ID. After checking her name against his list, he gave her a piece of paper and said, "Read it and get off the premises. Your services are no longer needed."

Foster was one of about 200 reservation clerks laid off by People Express that morning. Some received phone calls the night before telling them not to

come to work the next day. Others, like Foster, were turned away at the door. Since then, another 450 clerks have been terminated, the last 200 receiving their notices May 21. Newark, one of the nation's poorest cities, these predominantly black and Hispanic workers are being replaced in their \$5.00-an-hour jobs by college students, most of whom are white. Not more than a dozen have moved up to customer service jobs—i.e., permanent jobs at People Express paying over \$17,000 plus benefits.

People Express—whose top management, including President Donald Burr, worked previously at the notoriously anti-union Texas International Airlines—began operating bargain-price flights along the East Coast in April 1981. To handle phone reservations, the company hired

nearly 1,000 Newark-area residents. Reservation clerks were given three- and four-month contracts that they had to renew in order to stay on another term. Some clerks worked as long as two years on successive temporary contracts.

The use of temporary contracts enabled People Express to avoid paying benefits to the reservation clerks. The temporary contracts also helped the company argue that laid-off reservation clerks were ineligible to collect unemployment benefits, since they weren't permanent employees.

In April, the company's reservations planning committee announced that because the company's growth had exceeded all expectations, the company was phasing out the temporary reservations representative program



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and restaffing the reservations center with college students, under the Cooperative Education Program and the Extracurricular Work Experience Program.

Why hire students? According to Larry Martin, a People Express general manager, college students have no illusion about the permanence of the job. Laid-off workers see it differently: because students seek only temporary work, they won't complain about work conditions such as short breaks, inadequate facilities and frequent computer and phone monitoring of reservation clerk performance. Nor will they think about organizing a union.

Few of the laid-off clerks have found other jobs. Some are now active in the newly formed People Express Workers Association. With the help of attorneys at Newark Legal Services, they have fought the company's challenge to their unemployment benefits. And they have enlisted the city of Newark's Human Rights Commission to file a class action suit on their behalf with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. According to Joe Scrimmager of the Human Rights Commission, the suit seeks back pay and reinstatement, but the litigation can take several years to resolve.

—Richard Kazis

## Unemployed plan strategy

ERIE, PA.—On the brink of a summer when 900,000 Americans are scheduled to exhaust their unemployment benefits, the National Unemployed Network held its first national conference here in mid-June, attracting groups from as far away as Los Angeles and Seattle.

The drive to organize unemployed workers is one of the most spontaneous political groundswells in recent years. Within the last 18 months, dozens of local unemployed committees have sprung up around the country. Fifty were represented at Erie,

from 19 states. A few are sponsored by union locals, but most are independent.

And most are unknown outside their own communities. Until the Erie conference, few of the groups even knew one another existed. Only Pittsburgh's Mon Valley Unemployment Committee (MVUC) has attracted national attention, after it pressured a sheriff and judge to halt home foreclosure sales last April.

Their achievements and tactics vary widely:

- In Philadelphia, the seven-year-old Philadelphia Unemployment Project (PUP) discovered through a survey that 80 percent of the city's unemployed have no health insurance. The group monitors hospitals' compliance with the Hill-Burton Act requiring that key services be made available to the poor. PUP has picketed both noncomplying hospitals and private physicians who do not accept unemployed patients. It also managed to win a de facto foreclosure moratorium in April.

- In Baltimore, the United Committee for Unemployed People (UCUP) played a major role this year in winning a 10-week extension in state unemployment benefits. UCUP has a free health clinic and introduced an unemployed workers' bill of rights in the state legislature. In an upcoming mayoral election, UCUP plans to hold forums and rate candidates around unemployment issues.

- The Cleveland Council of Unemployed Workers gathered 15,000 signatures this spring in a petition drive to rescind benefit cuts.

Though most of the groups provide some form of emergency relief, such as food banks, nearly all see themselves as political organizations rather than service providers. "There is a tremendous difference between social services and viewing the unemployed as a potential political movement," said Keith Brooks, co-chairman of Baltimore's UCUP. "People are moving from self-help to a legislative agenda," said Jack Baublitz, a laid-off juvenile counselor and coordinator of the six-month-old Erie County Unemployed Committee. Many of the groups require their members to register as voters.

The new unemployed network faces formidable obstacles. Foremost is the difficulty of motivating the unemployed to participate. "We had a lot of people at the beginning," said MVUC coordinator Linny Stovall, echoing a familiar complaint. "But people got demoralized and their participation fell off."

Organized labor's support has been minimal. A few unions have relief programs or sponsor unemployed councils at the local level, but most of the internationals have kept their distance. Only one major union official, Dick Greenwood, a special assistant to Machinist president William Winpisinger, attended the Erie conference. "The unions are standing 100 miles off on this," Erie's Jack Baublitz said. "I haven't even been able to get in to talk to our Central Labor Council here. They should've been doing what we do."

—Bruce Shapiro

## Briefing: Atomic test risks no secret to Navy



Leonard Baslin

WASHINGTON—More than a million tons of radioactive water, spray and steam rained down on Bikini lagoon during the Navy's July 1946 atomic bomb tests, code-named "Operation Crossroads." Thirty-seven years later, the memory of Operation Crossroads is still vivid for the 42,000 atomic veterans who took part in it, many of whom now suffer from cases of cancer, heart disease, sterility and bone and muscle deterioration.

The U.S. Navy and the Veterans Administration (VA) have long denied that servicemen who were exposed to radiation during atomic tests received doses large enough to cause health problems. In fact, the VA has denied more than 98 percent of the medical claims brought by participants in atmospheric testing in the central Pacific and Nevada from 1946 to 1962.

But once-secret documents uncovered recently reveal that the Navy ignored continued warnings of severe health risks for servicemen taking part in Operation Crossroads. Improper decontamination procedures and inadequate radiation-monitoring equipment often resulted in exposures of 100 to 200 times the government's permitted level. "Contamination of personnel, clothing, hands and even food can be demonstrated readily in every ship in increasing amounts day by day," wrote a medical officer involved in the tests.

The newly discovered documents are the personal papers of Colonel Stafford Warren, chief of radiological safety for both the Manhattan Project, which developed the atomic bomb, and for Operation Crossroads. The documents, declassified 20 years ago, had remained in Warren's possession until after his death last year, when his widow donated them to

UCLA's library. The documents were discovered there by Anthony Guarisco, an Operation Crossroads veteran and research director for the National Association of Atomic Veterans (NAAV), an 8,000-member organization headquartered in Missouri.

At Operation Crossroads, a fleet of 90 target ships was positioned at "ground zero" to determine the effects of the atomic explosions on naval vessels in a "limited" nuclear war setting. The experiment seemed destined for danger from the start, according to official test documents. In one Crossroads underwater test experts had warned that if the radioactive "column" of water did not rise more than 10,000 feet above the target ships, extremely serious contamination could result. The column from that explosion rose only 6,000 feet, contaminating the ships "which may remain dangerous for an indeterminate time thereafter," said the fleet's Radiological Safety Section.

Many military officers exhibited indifference toward established radiological safety standards. Fleet commanders had a "hairy-chested approach with a disdain for the unseen hazard [of radiation], an attitude that is contagious to the younger officers," reported an officer at Crossroads' Radiological Safety Section in a letter to Warren. In a memorandum, Warren wrote that the equipment used to monitor radiation levels was rudimentary and often not used by Crossroads personnel. The instruments available to safety monitors were "experimental," and often failed to work entirely. Many men did not wear film badges, the minimal equipment required to measure external gamma radiation.

The fleet's Radiological Safety Section reported that "many persons received more than the permissible degree of radiation on a number of days, as indicated by the records of the film badges. It is likely that a number of persons not carrying film badges were similarly over-exposed."

Warren himself noted that it was "exceedingly common" to find dose limits surpassed. And contamination from plutonium was "extensive and unpredictable" so that "no one can say any place is safe for any length of time." The equipment to measure plutonium contamination was never made available for the decontamination operation at Crossroads, so exposure levels are pure speculation.

Decontamination efforts at Crossroads began before anyone really knew how to decontaminate a radioactive ship. The scope of the contamination also caught the servicemen off-guard. "No plans had been prepared for organized decontamination measures...since the nature and extent of the con-

tamination was completely unexpected," Warren wrote.

What Warren observed at Operation Crossroads inspired him to warn of the possibility of future suits by personnel involved in the atomic tests. A special medical-legal board was established to deflect criticism "and give what assurance was possible so no successful suits could be brought on account of the radiological hazards of Operation Crossroads." Warren wrote that the director of the Manhattan Project was "very much afraid of claims being instituted by men who participated in [Operation Crossroads]."

A host of claims has indeed been filed with the VA to compensate atomic veterans for their radiation exposure, but the agency has awarded benefits to only 69 of the 3,225 veterans who have filed claims.

The VA opposes an independent study to determine the health effects of radiation exposure from the atomic tests, a proposal now before the Senate. And although the VA has adopted guidelines offering free health care to veterans suffering from radiation-related ailments, it stalled that plan also, finally offering veterans free health care 17 months after Congress required it.

And NAAV reports that hundreds of atomic veterans have been denied access to free medical treatment since the VA adopted its guidelines two months ago. "It's up to the discretion of the individual physician to decide whether a veteran's ailments are caused by radiation and therefore eligible for free medical care," said Glenn Alcalay, NAAV science and medical advisor. "What seems to be happening is that conditions other than cancer are being overlooked for free treatment by the VA," he said.



Atomic veterans are currently urging the passage of a joint resolution now before the House that would establish July 16 (the anniversary of the first atomic bomb test) as Atomic Veterans Memorial Day. Several bills are also pending in Congress that would require an epidemiological survey of veterans and their children, establish a process for judicial review of veterans' claims filed with the VA and mandate formal rulemaking procedures for VA adjudication of radiation claims. "We atomic veterans are living and suffering with the effects of our exposure," said Guarisco. "We are seeking nothing more than those benefits which other veterans injured in serving our country are now receiving." —Jan Pilarski



By Chuck Fager

WASHINGTON

**O**N JUNE 15, 10 YEARS AFTER the *Roe Vs. Wade* decision that opened the way for legalized abortion in the U.S., the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional right to abortion. For anti-abortionists, this failure on the judicial front may only escalate a likely legislative battle.

As soon as the budget debate has ended—mid-July is the likely target date—Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker has agreed to give the go-ahead for the 1983 congressional debate on abortion. Two bills should be watched: the Hatch-Eagleton amendment and the Jepsen Re-

## Hatch-Eagleton could put the pro-choice movement back on defensive.

spect Human Life Act, successor bills of the earlier Hatch and Helms proposals, respectively.

An earlier bill proposed by North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms would have declared abortion illegal by statute. It was intended to spark a direct confrontation with the Supreme Court over the 1973 decision. By contrast, Utah Senator Orrin Hatch's proposal was a constitutional amendment, the first of which was intended to be a series of two. Initially, Hatch's proposal would have declared that there was no constitutional right to abortion, thereby allowing states and Congress to legislate against it.

In the proposal that will come before the Senate this year, the wording of last year's Hatch bill has been reduced by Sen. Thomas Eagleton to a one-sentence declaration: "a right to abortion is not secured by this constitution." If ratified, this amendment would in effect repeal *Roe vs. Wade*. Hatch and his supporters then hope to come back with a second amendment banning abortion outright.

The Helms bill has also resurfaced in the form of the Respect Human Life Act, introduced by Iowa Senator Roger Jepsen. As rewritten, the Jepsen bill not only declares abortion illegal, but also includes the recently struck down federal regulation against infanticide (the so-called "Baby Doe Rule") and several restrictions against federal funding for abortions. The Jepsen bill is on the Senate calendar, but is unlikely to be called up unless the Senate votes against the Hatch/Eagleton proposal. Even so, it will take

enormous pressure to persuade Baker to put the Senate through a second round of abortion rhetoric and the filibusters that will likely ensue.

Beyond the Senate floor, both the Hatch and Helms proposals were the subjects of bitter and divisive debate within the antiabortion movement, and these divisions have persisted.

At the most basic political level, debate on either bill seems to be an exercise in futility. Most observers agree that neither proposal has anywhere near the necessary number of votes to pass: for Jepsen, 60 votes will be needed to break a filibuster, then 51 to be adopted; for Hatch/Eagleton, 67 to pass. Publicly, supporters of each bill say that *their* proposal can attract enough votes while the other obviously can't. Privately, they know the votes aren't there for either one.

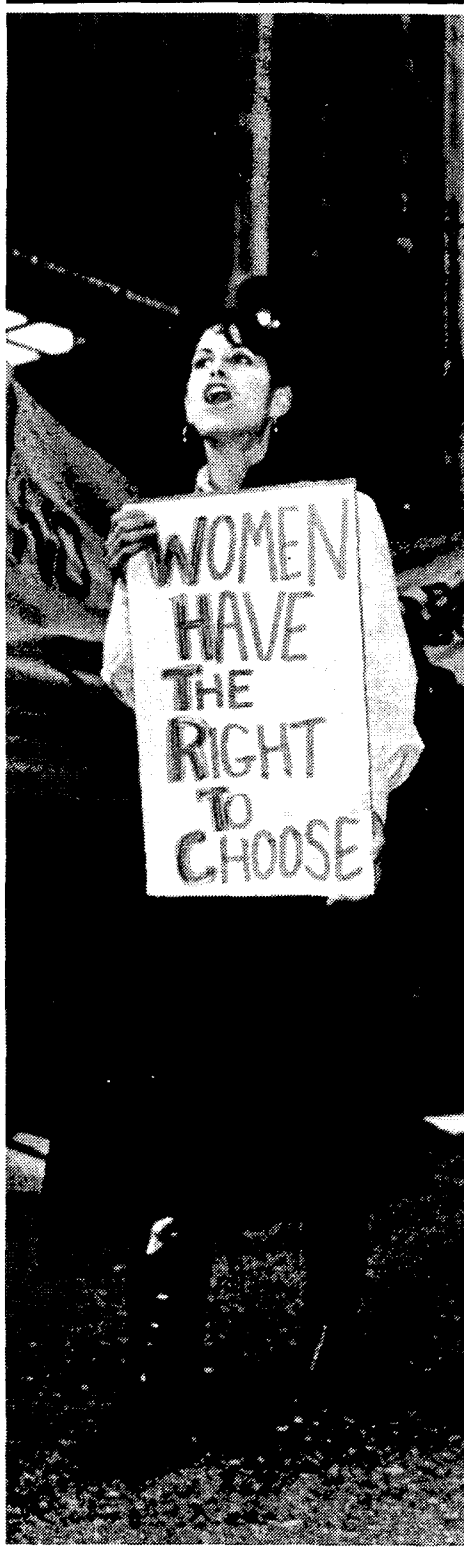
### Other goals.

But passage, of course, is only one goal of anti-abortion supporters. At the strategic level, supporters of these bills say that a vote will be useful for the 1984 elections to identify senators as targets for the right-to-life movement. This was the rationale given for pressing the Helms bill last summer, when similar odds were against it. Yet such an argument has a different sound in 1983 than it did at that time. Last summer everyone was still terrified of the New Right and the Reagan landslide of 1980; it seemed risky for a senator-facing re-election to take on the right-to-life legions. For instance, when Tennessee Democrat Jim Sasser provided a crucial vote against the Helms bill, he knew he was putting his seat on the line.

To campaign against Sasser and other adversaries (such as Lowell Weicker of Connecticut), Jesse Helms and his supporters raised millions of dollars in contributions. The campaigns were intense and dirty at times. But when the smoke cleared after election night, Sasser had been re-elected by a large margin, as had Weicker. This signaled a significant loss of clout by the anti-abortion movement in the legislative arena, because it had gone all out and had failed to unseat its major targets.

Of course, the movement can again use a vote—any vote—on anti-abortion legislation as a fundraising tool and a campaign slogan for 1984. But at this point, there is little evidence that many senators

## IN THE NATION



## ABORTION

# Rival right-to-life bills face Congress



will be intimidated into changing their vote on the issue, especially given the support in the judicial arena.

Will the impending debate then have any meaning or value besides the internal purposes of the movement demanding it? Will public opinion and the media see it as anything other than an irritant and a waste of scarce legislative time?

While the odds now appear against it, there is still a chance that a debate on Hatch/Eagleton *could* challenge the present congressional impasse on the issue and force pro-abortion supporters on the ideological defensive again. The effect of the debate will not be felt at the level of congressional action, nor as a factor in making the right-to-life crusade again an important player in the 1984 elections, but rather in the wider court of American public opinion.

The U.S. Catholic bishops, major backers of the Hatch/Eagleton proposal, are now in a position to influence the wider debate. They are on a roll, flush with media attention for their pastoral letter on nuclear weapons and deterrence. The bishops added a section on abortion to the final draft of their letter, making explicit the link between their opposition to destruction of life in the womb and their new stance of opposition to the mass destruction of life in nuclear war.

Thus the bishops will enter this debate with an air of consistency that has been notably lacking in the past, especially in the minds of more liberal-minded Americans. This will not, of course, generate instant conversions among pro-abortion or fence-sitting liberals, but it will make the bishops' arguments harder to ignore.

In addition to the bishops, numerous legal and constitutional scholars (including Archibald Cox) have made statements supporting Hatch's stand. These people will likely command a respectful hearing of their views.

Unlike Helms, Hatch/Eagleton does not outlaw abortion. It poses the question differently, asking in effect whether the public wishes to approve of abortion *as it is currently practiced*—that is, at the level of a million-plus abortions per year in this country. Such a formulation could have a different impact than previous proposals because public opinion on the subject is not simply divided, but is deeply ambivalent: most Americans want abortion to be available legally, but most Americans don't strongly approve of abortion when it is used as a matter of convenience (as it reportedly is in a large percentage of current cases).

Hatch/Eagleton is a more subtle attempt to use these ambiguous feelings. It can be presented not as an all-or-nothing proposal, but one of emphasis and degree: does the public approve of the current use of abortion as just another form of birth control? Hatch/Eagleton supporters are gambling that if the public hears the issue posed in this way, it will begin to shift more toward an anti-abortion stance, a shift that could eventually be translated into a political response.

But the continuing fierce infighting within the movement may undermine the strength of this new forum against abortion. Backers of the Jepsen bill consider Hatch/Eagleton a sellout, a sure debacle that can only lead to the demise of the U.S. Catholic bishops as a leadership group in the anti-abortion fight. The Jepsen supporters, which include most of the New Right groups that have become deeply entrenched in the right-to-life movement, are outraged by the bishops' linkage of their anti-abortion stance with their pastoral letter on nuclear weapons. Hatch and Eagleton may face as much opposition from within the anti-abortion movement as they will from outside it.

In addition, the pro-abortion groups could adjust their attacks on Hatch/Eagleton to reflect the differences in its support and emphasis, working to shift the focus from the wide usage of abortion to the ultimate goal of the proposal—which is the eventual outlawing of the practice.

Chuck Fager is a staff writer for the Washington City Paper.

Abortion rights demonstration in New York City.



## PUBLIC RADIO

## Even more distress signals from NPR

By Brooke Gladstone

WASHINGTON

**H**OW UNEASY ONE FEELS about National Public Radio (NPR) these days. It's as if your favorite uncle has been caught shoplifting a birthday present for you. He meant well, but...gosh.

Now teetering on the brink of bankruptcy brought about by too much optimism and too little management, NPR is in a position to find its independence compromised by the government funding arm, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). CPB has every right to protect its investment. It supplied about \$12 million, or 50 percent, of NPR's budget this year. Indeed, CPB has been subject to harsh criticism by congressional reps on both sides of the aisle for exercising too little oversight of NPR.

Nevertheless, fiscal oversight may have gone too far May 21 when NPR board chairman Myron Jones was informed by acting NPR chief Ron Bornstein that CPB had no confidence in

**NPR's projected deficit has ballooned to more than \$9 million. Yet spending has proceeded at a furious pace...**

Jones and would be less likely to approve an essential loan guarantee if he remained. Jones was asked to leave, and he did. The incident is not unusual in private industry, where major investors frequently call the shots, but it raises a warning flag for public broadcasting. When the presidentially appointed CPB board can exert such influence on NPR's directors, could it not similarly influence other areas of operation?

NPR's projected deficit for fiscal 1983 has ballooned from the \$5.8 million recorded in these pages last month to more than \$9 million. Spending has proceeded at a furious pace: of this year's \$26 million budget, \$18 million was paid out in the first six months. Meanwhile, NPR is slated to receive less than \$22 million in revenue.

What makes it worse is that not even Coopers & Lybrand, the fancy audit firm hired to explore the labyrinthine byways of NPR's financial management system, knows where all of that \$18 million went. And what they do know isn't reassuring. One example: \$850,000 due in federal and state withholding taxes was diverted to support NPR's operations during a cashflow crunch. NPR is currently trying to work that out with the Internal Revenue Service. Another: roughly \$800,000 in American Express charges for travel and entertainment was "poorly monitored." In some cases, that means they don't even know who used the card.

For the most part, the problems were

procedural. The new computer accounting system that NPR installed last October was "incapable of producing timely and accurate reports," the auditors said. Communication between NPR's financial department and departments writing checks was "sporadic" at best.

Nor was NPR particularly adroit in receiving money. The auditors noted that \$350,000 in bills to commercial customers renting NPR's satellite services was sent five months late. A staffer who bumped into one of the auditors in the hallway was told that some forgotten bills had just been discovered gathering dust in a finance manager's safe.

Clearly, NPR's financial management is in need of an overhaul. Trouble is, it's hard to change only *part* of something. NPR was, after all, doing something right: it was producing great programs.

Now, with Bornstein, a tough-minded, self-avowed "fiscal conservative" assigned to clean NPR's house, there's a danger that the new regime will toss out some treasures with the trash.

In 1981, President Reagan turned a cold shoulder to public broadcasting, achieving vast cuts in CPB's federal grant with no intention of stopping until nothing was left. Mankiewicz was galvanized. He greatly expanded program services, he created a commercial subsidiary. He vowed to be off the federal dole by 1986. He blew it.

But aside from the practical infeasibility of what he was attempting, was he right? No, according to a policy analyst who works for a member of Congress friendly to public broadcasting. "So public broadcasting got cut this time," the aide says. "Reagan won't be there forever. Concede you lost the battle, but don't give up the whole war."

By embarking on a mission to be independent of federal funding, Mankiewicz was trying to "appropriate" the network, the aide maintains. Without the government, who's to check in from time to time to make sure the medium is fulfilling its mission to serve the public?

Most public broadcasters believe that a "mix of funds" is the ideal approach for supporting the industry while protecting it from undue influences. Too much corporate support and you've got big business on your back. Too many subscribers (public broadcasting is a long way from that excess) and the high-brows call the shots. Too much government money—through CPB—and you've got whatever administration that's in power breathing down your neck. Too little of any of these things—the traditional plight of public broadcasting—and you've got a skimpy, shoestring service that nobody sees or hears.

Mankiewicz saw another alternative: if public radio goes into business and supports itself, nobody can tell it what to program. The aide says Mankiewicz's attempts to eliminate the government's role in public radio was not in the public interest. In any case, he couldn't pull it off and had to leave. A lifelong Democrat, Mankiewicz has taken a job with a blue-chip public relations firm called Gray & Company whose clients are chiefly Republicans.

Back at NPR, reporters and producers watch nervously as Bornstein performs his salvage operation.

Morale is low at NPR. Staffers say they feel like "Belgians in occupied Europe." Bornstein and his team freeze them out and tolerate no dissent, they lament. Bornstein says he was appointed "to save NPR" and that's what he intends to do. A third of the NPR workforce, some 139 positions, has been eliminated, most of it last month. The performance programming division has been all but scuttled. News is still there, NPR's flagship *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*, but it's not the same.

Bornstein's budget for NPR in fiscal 1984 is \$17.65 million (two-thirds of this year's), which includes programming, satellite distribution and NPR member services such as public radio's representation on Capitol Hill. But NPR won't be on the road to recovery until it pays its debts from this year. NPR is avidly seeking loans and contributions to "retire" its debt. During this process, NPR must rely on the sufferance of its creditors. If they were to demand payment now, the auditors say, NPR would be "unable to continue to exist."

News vice-president Barbara Cohen jumped ship last month to take a job with NBC as Washington manager for political coverage. She says that it's such a good job she would have taken it anyway, but concedes, "It's not much fun watching what you've built up over the last four years being dismantled."

Bornstein cut the news budget from an estimated \$5.3 million this year to \$4.5 million for fiscal 1984. Cohen wanted to push that up to \$4.8 million, claiming that the extra funds would protect diversity by enabling them to continue to buy acquisitions, produce on-the-spot reportage and assure high production value. Without the extra \$300,000, she warned, NPR would have to settle for more "two-ways" (interviews), Washington blather and "book writers." Bornstein didn't buy it.

Cohen thought the increased budget for news could be accomplished if Bornstein would merely adjust his conservative estimates for corporate and foundation grants next year. But Bornstein couldn't guarantee those funds and wasn't taking any chances. He projected that only \$1.5 million would come in from corporations and foundations in fiscal 1984, and set NPR's budget accordingly. (This year, NPR took in \$3.5 million in corporate and foundation grants.)

News received a 15 percent cut, while the performance programming division lost more than 80 percent of its budget and all but six of 34 staffers. NPR's two special program services—for the blind and for Spanish-speaking and other minority Americans—were merged into a single unit with a compressed budget.

Meanwhile, members of the staff, particularly the news staff, were getting mad. They knew their audience would help them out if only they were allowed to ask. But NPR's local member-stations wouldn't let them. For many stations, says NPR board member and station manager Steve Meuche, support from listeners is their "lifeline." Strapped managers fear that if NPR's superstars tapped their listeners' support, there wouldn't be as much money left for them. NPR's board convened a committee to look at on-air fundraising and direct-mail solicitation by NPR. This month, the committee rejected the proposal, saying that it violated the special relationship that local public-radio stations have with their audiences.

But NPR's news staff never stopped hoping. Earlier, both Mankiewicz and *Morning Edition* host Bob Edwards had only half-jokingly asked people to send money to NPR during an appearance on the *Today Show*. In NPR's own coverage of its fiscal crisis in May, an expert on direct-mail testified to the effectiveness of a good fundraising campaign. *All Things Considered* host Susan Stamberg, interviewed by NPR reporter Scott Simon, expressed her eagerness to call on her listeners for funds.

As a result of this not-so-subtle campaign, people sent a few thousand dollars to NPR headquarters. Local stations were irritated by what they saw as a preemptive foray into direct appeals to their listeners. Steve Meuche wrote a letter to the NPR news staff, telling them to stop pushing their luck.

Then came Friends of National Public Radio, an independent group of citizens that chipped in \$35,000 to put big ads in the Sunday *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. The ads—which appeared June 20, with photographs of Edwards and Stamberg and a banner headline that exhorted concerned citizens to "Save NPR" by sending in money—were created free of charge by Craver, Matthew, Smith & Co., a firm viewed as the liberal equivalent to conservative Richard Viguerie's direct-mail operation. (Craver Matthew, by the way, is also the firm that sent a rep to pitch the direct-mail idea on *All Things Considered*.)

Former Iowa Senator Dick Clark, who chairs Friends of NPR, says, "It was the first opportunity I know of that listeners have had to contribute directly in an emergency." But Minnesota Public Radio President Bill Kling says that if NPR approved the ad or its sponsor, it did so over the wishes of the local stations, and if it didn't then Friends of NPR—by using the network's name—is probably in violation of the law. Clark denies that NPR was involved in the group's formation and says he had "very careful legal advice" before establishing it.

Now what's going on here? Don't the local stations want better programs from NPR? Kling says that if NPR takes in those contributions—which, according to the ad, can be used only for national programming—then it will find itself enlarging its operations without any "visible means of ongoing support," putting the company "back in the boat" in which it is currently sinking.

But former NPR chairman Myron Jones welcomes Friends of NPR, whose members include practically every famous TV journalist imaginable: Cronkite, Woodruff, Brokaw, Rather, McNeil/Lehrer, Moyers, Mudd, Stahl, Kuralt, Koppel.

**...Of this year's \$26 million budget, about \$18 million was paid out in just the first six months.**

Meanwhile, Robert Siegal, NPR's London bureau chief for the last four years, returned to Washington last month to fill Barbara Cohen's slot. The staff was somewhat reassured. For the veteran reporters, he was a familiar face, for the newer ones at least a familiar voice. But the staff is still apprehensive about who the new president will be when Bornstein finishes his six-month tenure October 1.

Reporter Linda Wertheimer, like many of her colleagues, finds herself wondering who will fill Mankiewicz's chair: "Will it be someone who says—be as good as you can be again?"

*Brooke Gladstone is associate editor of Current, a non-profit newspaper that covers public TV and radio.*



# Houston

Continued from page 3

bor leaders, the AFL-CIO launched a \$1-million a year organizing campaign in October 1981. The Houston Organizing Project (HOP), supported by 29 unions, brings 20 organizers, 10 researchers and public relations workers and a computer to its effort to coordinate union organizing on winnable targets.

In its first 20 months it has drawn mixed reviews from local labor. C.L. "Chuck" Bertani, a hard-fighting Machinist and state AFL-CIO leader who does not participate in HOP, calls it "a total failure." Several leaders who once participated (like Plumbers business representative Phillip Lord) or still do (like AFS-CME president Maynard White) see the project as slow-moving or ineffective. But others, such as Service Employees (SEIU) organizer Stewart Acuff, applaud the assistance the project has given in organizing nursing homes and other health care facilities.

In its first 20 months, the project claims nine victories out of 12 elections in which HOP played a role (although the overall victory rate for the declining number of union elections is about 50 percent, close to its historical average and above the national average). Bob Comeaux, the 35-year-old director of HOP, says that the project can claim organization of

7,500 new members, most of them voluntary recognitions by contractors, teachers and city employees (who cannot bargain or have a contract) and sign-ups of members in previously organized plants.

"They chose the toughest time they could have picked to organize," said Gale Van Hoy, executive secretary of the Houston and Gulf Coast Building and Construction Trades Council. "The economy all went to hell just when they came. It used to be a business agent saw a non-union project and across the street was a union project. All his people were working so he ignored it (the non-union site). The recession alerted us, got us on our toes."

But if the recession woke up some unions and some non-union workers about the need to organize, it also created new fears. Workers fired for organizing face a long jobless wait before possible reinstatement. Competition among workers has increased, and local leaders increasingly complain about undocumented Mexican immigrants and former union members from the North—many of them now bitter about unions.

"People joined a union thinking it was going to protect them," said Harris County AFL-CIO president Maynard White. "But a lot of time there's not much that a union could do."

SEIU organizer Acuff explained HOP's slow start as a result of the economic pressures: "The biggest impediment to organizing is fear. When people have moved from formerly industrialized areas and have seen their jobs wiped out and

lives disrupted, they're even more fearful."

Non-union contractors, who have long controlled most all home building, have made inroads into commercial building and have even launched assaults on the strongholds of downtown office construction. Unions like the Machinists and Steelworkers have been particularly hard-hit by layoffs and plant closings.

At Cameron Iron Works, Chuck Bertani reports 2,800 of his 4,500 members are laid off. He expects few will ever return as the company moves operations to France and Singapore. Now, like many union leaders in Houston, he faces company demands for wage and work rule concessions. But unlike the building trades and several manufacturing locals, Bertani's union voted overwhelmingly to reject management concession demands now being discussed.

"It's like fighting for your country," Bertani said of his members' defense of their contract. "You know you're going to get killed, but you still fight for it."

Negotiating downward doesn't give unorganized workers any reason to join a union, he says: "It's like the boxer who keeps getting knocked down. It doesn't help his image." Roy Vanya, a steelworker representative who narrowly lost a union election at a 300-employee oil equipment factory after two layoffs just before balloting, thinks that the double whammy of high unemployment and concessions has reduced labor to a waiting game for recovery. "Concessions definitely hurt us," he said.

Some building trades locals have lost ground despite concessions designed to make union contractors more competitive with non-union firms. The unions gave up many cherished work rules. Management has complete control over crew sizes, supervisors and equipment. Morning and afternoon coffee breaks were dropped, and workers now have to be at their workplace—for example, high in a new office tower—and not just at the construction site from starting time to the end of the day.

## Open arms policy.

Although most building trades leaders believe illegal Mexican workers should not be in unions and will not organize them, other unions, like SEIU and the Hotel and Restaurant Employees, embrace any worker. "The undocumented workers are the most suppressed," Roy Vanya argues. "If you've got some good Mexican-American organizers, you can get them."

Yet most organizers acknowledge that the illegal immigrants are especially vulnerable and fearful. "Our biggest problem in organizing in this area is illegals," says Joe Cones, a Carpenters organizer who straddles the dilemma. "We'll try to organize them, but we wish they weren't here."

HOP brings researchers, a computer, public relations aid and a mobile corps of organizers to help local unions. The ultimate aim is to help organizers spend more time with workers who have the greatest potential of being organized. Judging from targets picked so far, those are often minorities and women in low-wage service industry jobs as well as public employees.

HOP has given special assistance to the new national campaign by SEIU and the United Food and Commercial Workers to organize Beverly Enterprises, the largest and fastest-growing nursing home chain in the country (*In These Times*, April 6). One-fifth of its homes are in Texas, and SEIU has recently won union elections at two other nursing homes with HOP aid.

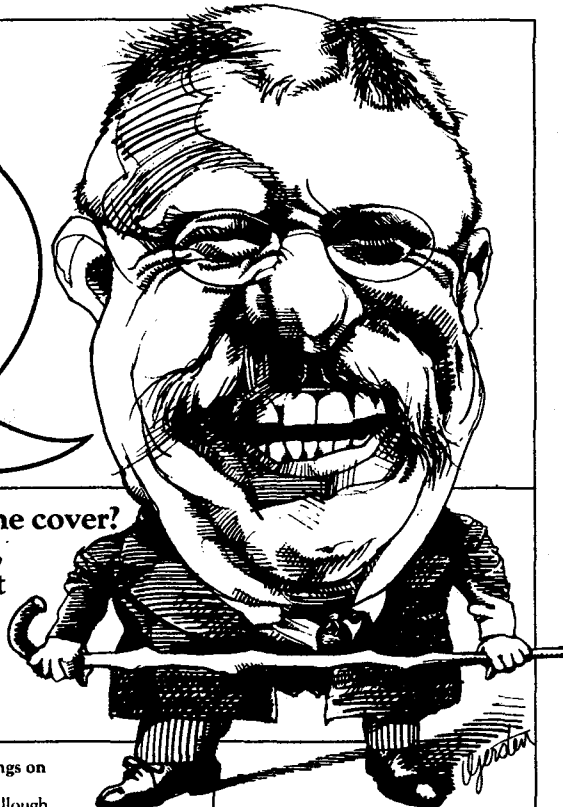
HOP and other unions are increasingly relying on demonstrations and mobilization of community support to back up the professional organizers and the in-plant committees of workers. But some leaders like Campbell and Bertani would like to see unions use their own members to reach out more—as former vice-president Tony Mazzochi did briefly in OCAW and newly elected president Richard Trumka plans for the Mineworkers. But workers will have to be convinced that their unions are fighting effectively for them in order to join such a campaign. For all its technological assistance, HOP cannot hope to accomplish what a crusade by committed, enthusiastic union members could do.

Yet union organizers are convinced that their greatest ally will be a recovery of the now-depressing local economy. "This is the darkest period we've had since 1942," Vanya said. "Anybody who thinks we ought to set the woods on fire has lost their mind."

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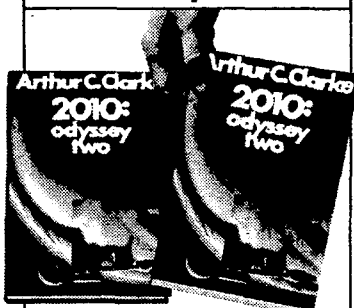
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President Machel of Mozambique, which was attacked May 23.

## AFRICA

# South Africa tries to crush neighbor

By Allen Isaacman

MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE

**L**AST MONTH'S HIGHLY PUBLICIZED South African air attack on the Mozambican capital of Maputo, followed by Pretoria's continued saber-rattling, suggest that this region is becoming a terrain of increasing international conflict. South Africa's attempt to redefine the conflict in Cold War terms, describing its borders with Angola and Mozambique as "its first and second fronts against Communism," carries ominous implications of a broader global conflict.

The May 23 air attack against Mozambique is part of South Africa's long-term strategy to intimidate the struggling socialist nation. The strategy dates back to 1974, before Mozambican independence, when senior South African officials contemplated a preemptive attack against Mozambique to prevent FRELIMO, the Mozambican liberation movement, from coming to power. But a sharply divided South African government eventually concluded that the strategy was not feasible, though it did give at least tacit support to an abortive white-settler coup of September 1974.

Instead, South African policymakers chose to put increasing economic and military pressure on Mozambique to ensure that the government of Samora Machel could not threaten their apartheid regime. Since FRELIMO inherited an economy totally dependent on South Africa, Pretoria has been able to exert pressure easily. Shortly after independence, for example, it cut the number of Mozambican laborers working in the gold mines from more than 100,000 to 30,000,

depriving the new government of its most important source of hard currency. Pretoria also redirected South Africa's valuable export trade away from the port of Maputo and has threatened to build a new Indian Ocean facility to replace Maputo.

South African military pressure has been even more devastating. As early as 1976, South African intelligence, together with its Rhodesian counterpart, organized an anti-FRELIMO fifth column comprised of former Portuguese secret police and ex-colonial troops, disaffected settlers and mercenaries that became the basis of the Mozambique National

Resistance (MNR). By 1978, from its bases in Rhodesia, MNR was plundering agricultural cooperatives, burning schools and medical centers, interdicting railroad lines, disrupting commerce, attacking major economic projects and effectively paralyzing the planned transformation FRELIMO's efforts to improve the quality of life in the countryside. (See *In These Times*, Nov. 24, 1982.)

Pretoria assumed complete responsibility for recruiting, training and supplying MNR forces operating within Mozambique. MNR commander Alfonso Dhlakama once boasted to Portuguese journalists that South African Defense Minister Malan had made him a colonel, assuring him that "your army is now part of the South African Defense Force."

The MNR played an important role in trying to sabotage SADCC (Southern African Development Coordinating Conference), the integrated regional alliance of Zimbabwe, Angola, Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana, Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique forged in 1980 to break South Africa's economic hegemony. According to several Mozambican field commanders, white Afrikaners regularly accompany MNR bands in the central part of the country. A young officer who had fought in Manica province said his battalion had discovered several dead white soldiers when it overran MNR bases at Chidogo.

With the aid of these South African officers, MNR scored several successes in 1981 and 1982, regularly cutting the railroad lines between Maputo and Zimbabwe, harassing trains from Beira, Mozambique's second leading port, to Zimbabwe, and periodically blocking rail traffic between Beira and Malawi. Pretoria's strategy was clear. Mozambique's ports serve as the international gateway for many of the landlocked SADCC countries—most notably Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia. Without a viable transportation and communication network all other forms of regional cooperation would be impractical and SADCC would be aborted from the outset, thereby insuring South Africa's regional domination. In December 1982, South African raiders destroyed 34 oil storage tanks in Beira valued at more than \$40 million. This led to a severe shortage in Zimbabwe.

At the same time that South Africa was intensifying its economic pressure, it was redefining its long-term military objectives. Fearing the increasing popularity of the African National Congress (ANC) and its ability to attack strategic points within South Africa, Pretoria embarked upon a campaign to compel its neighbors not to provide sanctuaries or support for the ANC. In 1981 it began attacks on the homes of South African refugees—some ANC members—who lived on the outskirts of Maputo. The MNR assassination of Ruth First, a leading member of the ANC and an outspoken critic of the apartheid regime, in August 1982 increased the pressure.

But the December 1981 attack against

ANC homes in Maseru, the capital of Lesotho, coinciding with the Beria oil facilities assault, was a warning to Mozambique that Maputo would be next. This January MNR initiated an offensive to capture—or at least isolate—southern Mozambique, including the capital. According to Sebastiao Mabote, Mozambique's chief of staff, by April MNR forces in the area had been routed.

It is against this backdrop that South Africa launched the recent air attack on Maputo. Ostensibly, the attack was in reprisal for an ANC attack in Pretoria several days earlier. Although South Africa claimed that it struck only at ANC military bases in Mozambique, a group of reporters touring the area unescorted

## South Africa wants to redefine the regional conflict in Cold War terms describing border skirmishes as the frontline against Communism.

said, "All the victims appear to be civilians and there was no evidence of hits connected with the ANC, and no sign of Mozambican missile installations."

There was a clear message in the attack, which occurred in Matola, Mozambique's principal industrial zone: Mozambique's fragile economy will be held hostage. Many fear the next target will be the Limpopo valley, the nation's breadbasket, located within easy striking distance of the South African border.

Ironically, the air attack came less than a month after a high-level Mozambican delegation had met with South African officials at the border town of Komatipoort. At that meeting, as in an earlier meeting last December, the Mozambicans reaffirmed their commitment to "promote peaceful co-existence with all countries, regardless of their social systems." They assured South Africa that there were no ANC military bases in Mozambique, but acknowledging they lacked the ability to patrol the long unmarked border separating the two countries.

Western diplomats also said that after the December encounter, some ANC members and South African refugees left Maputo as part of a reported agreement in which the South Africans promised to reduce support for MNR. But such an agreement, real or not, hasn't held, and Mozambique is braced for more South African attacks.

Allen Isaacman is co-author of a forthcoming study, *Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution, 1900-1982*.

# Slow progress stirs dissent

By Gay W. Seidman

HAVARE, ZIMBABWE

**T**HE CONFLICT HERE BETWEEN Prime Minister Robert Mugabe's ruling ZANU party and exiled Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU party, the main opposition party threatens to erupt again, as it did with the January atrocities in Matabeleland and the March trials of ZAPU's military leaders.

Although tensions have relaxed in past months, the roots of civil conflict remain firmly planted, reaching deeper than the tribal and regional differences among Zimbabweans highlighted by the Western press. Dissatisfaction with ZANU's slow progress down the road to socialism and with Mugabe's failure to deliver on his promises of redistribution of land and

other goods contribute to outbursts of what the government officially characterizes as "social banditry."

Mugabe's ZANU party inherited a capitalist economy that is highly dependent on South Africa. Yet its popular base lies with peasants, who continue to expect major changes from the government. Unable—or perhaps unwilling—to radically challenge existing structures, ZANU appears unable to control growing dissatisfaction in the countryside.

For many Zimbabweans, life has improved since the white minority regime fell in 1980. Greatly expanded educational and health facilities, a minimum wage and new job openings for blacks are visible benefits of independence. But most arable land is still in private hands, as are banks, factories and mines. Squatter movements onto white-owned land have generally been squashed by the govern-

ment. Unemployment remains high, while inflation has eaten away many of the gains created by the new minimum wage. The government continues to rely on private foreign investment as the motor for economic development. Strikes are still virtually illegal. And ZANU has been unable to break the country's dependence on South Africa. Some imports now come through Mozambique, but most still come from the south.

The transition to socialism that Mugabe has repeatedly promised has proved slower than ZANU apparently expected. In many cases, the old state structures seem to have taken over the party, rather than the other way around. Charges of corruption in government are common, and the prime minister's attack on bourgeois tendencies only underlines his cabinet's reputation for high living. While

*Continued on the following page*



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ZANU remains popular, especially in the areas it controlled during the 10-year liberation struggle, the democratic structures for which it was renowned appear to have disintegrated in the past three years.

There are many reasons behind ZANU's apparent shift away from its victory promises. The Lancaster House agreements—under which the minority regime allowed fair elections—saddled the new government with a reactionary civil service, restrictions on land takeovers and limits to constitutional reform. And the country's proximity to, and economic dependence on, South Africa makes the threat of invasion or trade embargoes real.

Zimbabwe's prospects for following socialist policies were brighter than most African countries because of its rich natural resources and a far more educated population. But many government officials now privately admit that socialism is not on the immediate agenda: the sacrifices that would be required, they say, would be too great for the black elite to accept.

Thus the conflict between a slow-moving government and a politicized popular base surfaces in the ZANU-ZAPU conflict. On April 18, Mugabe told a crowd in Matebeleland that his government will not tolerate "dissident" activity, warning that his threats will be backed by the national army—which, he said, will not be overly concerned to protect citizens

caught in the crossfire.

In general, the Western press explained the ZANU-ZAPU conflict in terms of tribal differences. ZAPU head Nkomo is described as the leader of the 20 percent of the population that speaks Ndebele, while Mugabe is described as the leader of the Shona-speaking majority. (This interpretation is also popular among white South African politicians, who point to Zimbabwe as an example of the effects of one-man, one-vote in Africa.)

Mugabe and most ZANU members are Shona-speaking, and Nkomo and most Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans belong to ZAPU. Yet it is more accurate to portray the ZANU-ZAPU split in regional, rather than ethnic, terms. Most Ndebele speakers live in the southwest, and most ZAPU support comes from the same region—the region in which ZAPU guerrillas fought and recruited during 15 years of armed struggle. But the population in the southwest is by no means entirely Ndebele-speaking; even Nkomo speaks Kalanga, a Shona dialect.

While ZAPU's soldiers came into Zimbabwe's southwest from Zambia, ZANU's military wing operated through the Mozambican front into northeastern Zimbabwe. ZANU's operational area—and thus its pool for recruits—was almost entirely Shona-speaking.

Yet this alone does not explain the intensity of the current fight between the two parties. Following a year of relative harmony, the division between party leaders re-emerged with appalling bitterness in early 1982. Nkomo was tossed out

of the cabinet following the discovery of large arms caches on ZAPU-owned farms. Immediately, hundreds of former ZAPU soldiers began deserting the national army—taking their weapons with them.

Soon dissident activity—armed robbery, kidnapping and bombings of government equipment and buildings—increased. Last year government troops were sent into Bulawayo to rout dissidents. In January this year, the prime minister sent in the Fifth Brigade, an army branch made up entirely of former ZANU fighters. People in the southwest tell tales of army atrocities committed during the search for dissidents and their supporters—tales of humiliation, torture and executions.

The behavior of ZAPU soldiers can be attributed to the fact that although Mugabe has kept some ZAPU leaders in the cabinet and even now rules a coalition government, most ZAPU ex-combatants have been unable to get jobs or training. Their ZANU counterparts, on the other hand, have moved into government jobs, training programs and other unofficial spoils of war.

The resentment over this bias against ZAPU members smoldered for two years but burst into flames with Nkomo's ouster and the takeover of all ZAPU property last year. Nkomo's personal credibility is low. He is often described as ambitious, greedy and venal. Nevertheless, he has been ZAPU's leader since 1959 and still commands respect in ZAPU's ranks. Moreover, the leaders of ZAPU's mili-

tary wing have been in detention since early 1982 and are still in prison, although they were recently found innocent of treason charges.

But even if a few hundred dissidents decided to return to the bush, it need not have prompted civil war. There are plenty of dissatisfied Zimbabweans around, willing to support guerrilla activity. The strongest support being in the southwest, unlike the rest of the country, where ZANU is still the only articulate leadership, existing ZAPU structures may provide outlets for peasants angry at the slow pace of change.

All the ingredients exist for some sort of "social banditry": dissatisfaction with the slow pace of the revolution. The facts that guns are still easy to come by, left over from the liberation struggle, and the presence of a highly trained and experienced guerrilla force probably make some level of anti-government fighting inevitable. And add to that mixture an unquantifiable amount of South African "destabilization."

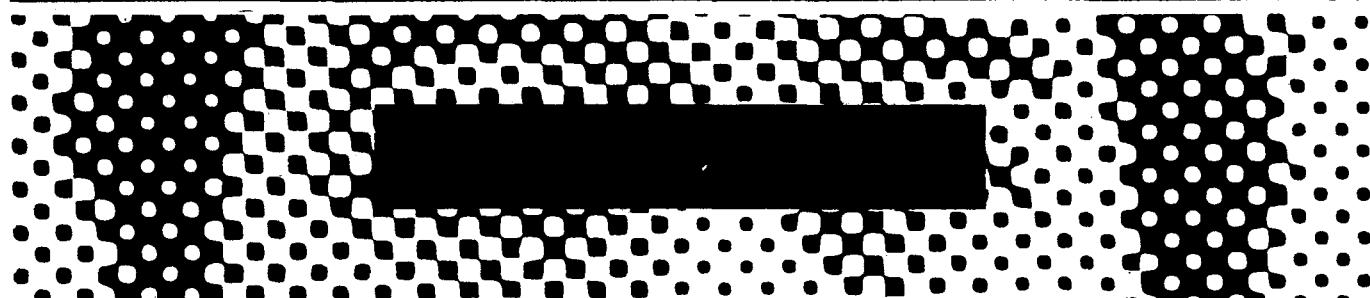
South Africa's involvement remains unproven, although the Pretoria regime is known to support opposition forces in Angola, Mozambique and Lesotho: the pattern is clear. In Zimbabwe, South Africa appears to be provoking the national army to retaliate by pretending to be ZAPU fighters engaged in banditry. Mugabe claims that Zimbabwean refugees, who have been flooding across the border into neighboring Botswana, are being recruited for training in South Africa. The fighting in the southwest could keep Zimbabwe's government too preoccupied to think about breaking economic dependency, and too insecure to allow the South African liberation movement to build bases in Zimbabwe.

Observers sympathetic to Mugabe are puzzled by the government's reaction to the fighting. From the beginning, Mugabe and his ministers have taken an unbending stance, which has angered more than it has subdued. In part the harsh reaction appears to stem from a conviction that the dissidents are really thieves and bandits, or outside agitators with little support. But by treating the opposition as if it stemmed entirely from tribal interests rather than recognizing the concerns it is expressing, the government appears to be looking for scapegoats—and may have created divisions that could take years to heal.

The fighting reportedly has died down during the last two months, although reliable reports are hard to come by. It is not yet clear whether the southwest has been bruised into submission, or whether ZAPU is merely trying to regroup following Nkomo's flight into exile. No neighboring country will provide an external base for ZAPU activity, which makes a full-scale war unlikely. But unless Mugabe's government takes some steps to satisfy the people who put it in power—and as long as South Africa is willing to stir the pot—it seems probable that the fighting will continue on some level or other for the foreseeable future.

Gay Steidman is co-author of *Zimbabwe: A New History*.

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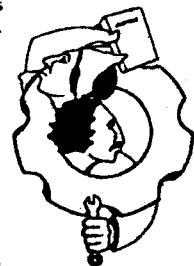
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## POLAND

## A moment of freedom

By David Julian Ost

**I**T WAS NO SURPRISE TO SEE POPE John Paul II greeted in his homeland like the triumphant leader of the opposition, returning home after a long exile. In a real sense, that's what he is. The opposition that the Pope leads, however, is a curious one.

He offers no program, and indeed none is demanded of him. He suggests no way out of Poland's crisis except for the beginning of a "dialog" between the government and representatives of different social groups organized in their own independent organizations. Officially, even the government calls for such a dialog.

The Pope was obviously pleased with the outcome of his pilgrimage to his homeland. He reveled in the reception accorded him by the millions he believes he knows so well. He spoke in general terms of social justice, in practical terms of the need for independent trade unions, in moral terms of special care for the arrested and persecuted.

To his credit he also spoke of the necessity for a halt in the arms race, a topic not too popular among the Poles, who usually fear only the weapons of the East. In fact, his words were not so different from what he has said on other papal trips and, contrary to what much of the American press said, were certainly not unanticipated by the Polish government. If John Paul could lecture a group of business leaders in Milan last month on the importance of trade unions, it would be a glaring omission to avoid the subject in Poland.

The Poles greeted the Pope as their leader because there simply aren't any other popular leaders around. Lech Walesa is trying his best to regain stature, but being a political and not a spiritual figure, he can only do this if the government meets with him—something it steadfastly refuses to do. (The Pope's meeting with Walesa had not yet occurred at the time of this writing.)

The Pope, on the other hand, is a world leader, sovereign of an independent state with global influence. The Polish government may exclude from public participation any domestic group it wants to, regardless of its influence, but it cannot so define the realm of international politics.

Thus the mantle of national leadership falls entirely on Pope John Paul's shoulders. His spiritual authority derives from his position in Rome. But what the Pope also has in Poland—something he lacks anywhere else—is *political* authority. This is the source of his unique appeal: the Polish government talks with him, listens to him, allows him to speak directly to the people at huge rallies and indirectly through the mass media.

Since the imposition of martial law, the Pope has been the only person who shares the aspirations of the August 1980 strike wave (if not exactly of the post-August 1980 revolution spearheaded by Solidarity) allowed this freedom by the government. Walesa is hounded and ignored, Jacek Kuron is in prison, worker activists are forced into exile, others are forced to live on the margins of society, but the Pope may say what he wants for

all of Poland to hear. And he derives this political authority from the fact that he alone is allowed to say publicly what millions of others can say only privately. In this way, millions of Poles find their public dignity through his words.

Since the imposition of martial law, Poles have called on the government to talk with those leaders who were democratically elected by millions of workers during the Solidarity period, and the government has systematically refused. But it did not refuse to talk to the Pope. The meeting between Jaruzelski and John Paul marked the first time that an acknowledged opponent has been allowed to conduct a frank and public dialog with the junta leader.

All this points to a fundamental fact about the Polish system: the only accepted political actor outside of the Communist Party is the Catholic Church. Through no special merit of its own, the Church is the only permitted political opposition. Of course, the Solidarity period had

discussed.

Responsibility for the clericalization of Polish life then falls squarely on the shoulders of the Communist government. A non-religious independent public sphere had been formed by Polish society during the 16-month outburst of creativity known as the Solidarity period. By destroying all this, the regime drove all opposition back into the arms of the Church.

To an observer, it was quite obvious that religious identification—in particular a special bond with the Pope—grew deeper and stronger after December 1981. For many people, martial law meant that politics had failed, and although religious faith may not lead to triumph, it at least does not so cruelly disappoint. If the flourishing diversity of public and political life during these 16 months had been allowed to continue, the Church would be what even most Poles agree it ought to be: an institution charged with a spiritual mission in society, and not an in-

## The Pope's meeting with Jaruzelski marked the first time a regime opponent was allowed to conduct a frank public dialog.

changed that, but the authorities then imposed martial law, outlawing every independent social institution outside of the Church. Thus the Church was cast, not for the first time in its history, into the role as the sole legal alternative—a role it has played for much of the past 200 years, first during the years of partition until 1918, and then again after 1944, when the state socialist revolution—from above was brought to Poland by the Red Army and sanctioned by the West at Yalta.

Many observers in the West, especially on the left, who would like to sympathize with the Polish struggle find the religious terms in which the talk of social justice is couched to be disquieting, if not downright odious. But this attitude misses the particularity of the Polish situation: no other terms are accepted. The Communist Party regime insists that political opposition—even socialist opposition—either be Catholic, or be quiet. For example, it is almost solely in the pages of the independent Catholic weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny*—the paper the Pope used to write for—that alternative programs, including democratic socialist ideas, can be

situation with a near-monopoly on the nation's cultural and even political life. The imposition of martial law smothered Polish society by uniting everybody in a simple, although understandable, moral opposition to the new authorities, as well as by forcing virtually all critical thought into either the cathedral or jail.

### No catharsis.

Most Poles realize that little—if anything—will change as a result of John Paul's visit. They welcomed him precisely for the chance to express themselves freely in his presence—the chance to voice their objections to a regime that allows no other outlet for such manifestations, and, above all, for the chance to feel better for a week. The government obviously hoped that the cathartic experience would render the people more disciplined and therefore more manageable in the future. But this is wishful thinking for precisely the same reason that any naive hopes of a return of an independent social life in the wake of the Pope's visit is wishful thinking. Because as the government has for some time now been warning—through its deeds as well as its words—nothing

will change after the Pope returns to Rome. Yet this also means the people will maintain and even deepen their faith, as well as their moral objection to the regime that refuses to change.

Poland has reached an impasse, with each side waiting for the other to change. The government invited the Church leader and allowed people to hold quasi-political demonstrations for a week in order to convince them that it is not so bad after all and that it really ought not be distrusted. (It was a ridiculous spectacle in the Polish press, as government leaders constantly pointed out their own merits and then either pleaded with the people to recognize this or berated them for not doing so.)

The bulk of the population, on the other hand, tried to hold out against reconciliation with the unhappy post-Solidarity status quo, hoping that continued resistance would somehow finally force the government to accept them as they really are. Their courage is maintained by their history, which shows, as *Tygodnik Powszechny* recently put it, that "the Polish nation has never been interested in 'semi-freedom'." Actually, if there was one theme that the Pope stressed in Poland, in contrast to his papal homilies elsewhere, it was the holiness of the suffering past. In Polish political culture, resistance to an authority that denies personal freedom is not only a patriotic act, but a moral imperative.

In the weeks ahead there will likely be a marked increase in repression, which may include intensified police patrols, arrests of people noticed to be active during the Pope's stay and punitive dismissals from work and conscription into the army. The government will want to quickly remind Poles that the party is over, the Pope will be away for a few years and, in the meantime, there is another authority that demands obedience.

Yet it is also likely that General Jaruzelski will soon be removed from his position as first secretary of the Party, perhaps as early as the crucial ideological session of the Central Committee due to convene next month. In this way, Jaruzelski can take the blame for the embarrassing spectacle of Free Catholic Poland during the Pope's pilgrimage. The significance of a Jaruzelski dismissal should not be exaggerated, however. Martial law will still be "lifted"—a basically meaningless gesture—probably at the second anniversary of its imposition.

As for the Party, having a military man as its leader has been a compromising situation for both the Polish and the Soviet parties. Jaruzelski's removal, and his replacement no doubt by a dogmatic hardliner out of a bygone era, will be portrayed as a sign of regained maturity for the Party. It will also be a sign that political business-as-usual is returning, finally, after a long phase that began in August 1980 and ended this month with the festivities for Pope John Paul II.

*David Julian Ost was in Poland from September 1981 to December 1982, reporting for In These Times and studying as a Fulbright scholar.*



# the Cannes

A report from the frontlines

of wo

Hanna Schmitt

## At Cannes

**F**ILM "FESTIVALS" ARE DIFFERENT from any other kind of art event because they are an unholy combination of art and promotion, exhibitionism and cultural consciousness. At Cannes, the hotly anticipated films are in the official competition, striving for a Palme d'Or, while the action and eros movies are involved in standard capitalist competition. This is just the reverse of what goes on at Berlin. (See accompanying story.)

In Cannes, a festival goer is instantly aware of three major interest groups. The first and most visible are the merchants, hawking films as if they were lottery tickets. Films with names like *Never Say Never Again* and *Emmanuelle Meets the Muses* seem to get saturation promotion up and down the Croisette (Cannes' main drag that curves along the harbor). Most of the buyers and distributors, however, are looking for that cheap little film that will merit a lot of free publicity from the writings of Rex Reed or the *Village Voice*'s J. Hoberman, to choose two polar opposites. Thus, the Cannes festival is bound to cough up a few "discoveries" because one of the most exciting things to do at the festival is ransack the long lists of films brought there from obscure countries or independent producers.

The assembled film critics are supposed to see as many films as their spines can withstand and then still give the best possible attention to stars and directors alike. The obscurantist mentality exhibited at Cannes, which last year discovered *Diva*, brings everybody back in eager anticipation of a newly discovered director's repeat performance. But this year the "business" claimed *Diva*'s director Jean-Jacques Beineix and inflated his dreams along with his budget. His new film, starring the biggest European stars available, Nastassia Kinski and Gerard Depardieu, was titled *Moon in the Gutter*, and immediately dubbed by the critics "Diva in the Ditch."

Similar circumstances surround the work of many great directors with unique artistic vision. Budgets too big for their stories tend to inflate their visions, ballooning them into delusions. The grand master of French cinema, 83-year-old Robert Bresson (*Pickpocket*) is shown in every Film 101 course) was at Cannes with possibly his final film. His new film *L'Argent* (*Money*) begins with an intriguing idea of how counterfeit money changes hands, eventually bringing an innocent man into the plot, who serves as the fall-guy. He either is or is not, depending upon the interpretation of Bresson's character, a "natural criminal."

The dilemma of the viewer is to play the part of the jury in judging the man and analyzing developments leading to an axe-murder. However interesting the original conception may have been, the execution is deliberate and unnecessarily detaining. When one has long since realized what is going on, Bresson is still slowly unwinding his minimalism. Cannes is too hectic to be hospitable to that kind of film.

The case of *L'Argent* (soon at an art theater near you!) is typical of many of the art directors on the international scene: with the recent increased interest in serious films, filmmakers are adopting philosophical and political dimensions that cannot be sustained in most cases. The Turkish filmmaker Yilmaz Guney, who has directed from within prison and is now free in France, has made *The Wall*, a sort of "Pixote in Prison." It is confounded by obscure cultural conventions that frustrate an audience not acquainted with Turkish customs or the completely different social world of a Turkish prison. For example, a wedding ceremony takes place in the prison, full of ceremonial details of a Moslem wedding and, subsequently, the couple is ushered into a room where they appear to be killed immediately. At the press conference, Guney explained that they were taken out and hanged, but the reason remained unclear. When filmmakers have political messages or strong stories for the world, it is also their responsibility to clarify the anthropological elements and to make the film accessible, which does not mean to water them down.

The greatest attraction of a film festival like Cannes is the opportunity it affords to compare the crass commercial products with the kind of specialized fare generally associated with festivals. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that even so-called commercial films in competition, or scattered through individual cinemas, are all there because their producers

or distributors think the picture needs the specialized consideration and framework of a festival to launch it.

Even the Soviets this year had an enormous, glossy booth for their socialist realism featuring enormous revolving ads for films with names like *Agony* and *Ten Days That Shook the World*, their answer to *Reds*. The Americans brought *Cross Creek*, that simpering swamp where the Waltons would live if they moved farther south, based on a novel by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings that makes her sound like a writer of real estate copy. "Art" did not save the film from a hostile reaction. The mistake was in believing that people don't do their own shopping. Many did and found a Hungarian film, *The Revolt of Job*, with both appeal and politics.

*Job* is about a Jewish family in rural Hungary who, in expectation of fascist persecution, adopt a gypsy child who is to carry on the family name. Their life is seen, with charming confusion, through the eyes of the recalcitrant boy, who eventually warms to them and becomes a part of the family. He must witness their departure at gun-point.

An American film that fared better at Cannes was Robert Duvall's *Angelo, My Love*. Gypsies have their own profile in almost every European country, and this film offered the first glimpse of how these people operate in the U.S. Duvall's departure from the customary documentary approach to such themes did not distort perceptions of gypsy culture. To see such a film through the eyes of Europeans is to realize the power of the melting-pot principle in the U.S., where gypsies seem to be far more integrated to social life than elsewhere in the world. The departure from documentary was severely criticized in the case of other director, Ann Hui from Hong Kong whose film *Boat People* offered a dramatic rendition of an escape



# Berlin Axis

By Karen Jaehne

World cinema competition.

won best actress award at Cannes for *The Story of Pierra*, a film about incest.

Vietnam. In spite—or perhaps because of—four years of research, Hui shunned the documentary approach to the subject—the result becoming an indictment of the government of Vietnam without a portrayal of them in anything but clichés. *Boat People* is sure to raise a controversy when it is released in the U.S. in a few months, as Vietnam “experts” of several persuasions will undoubtedly lock horns.

Obviously, Cannes can harbor any kind of film, and the strongest “films for thinking people,” as one self-satisfied critic dubbed the festival, are presented to a very critical forum. The prizes offered to the “best” films and filmmakers are truly prestige items, inevitably given to deserving and daring “issue” movies or to demanding, uncompromising art films, as in the case of this year’s Palme d’Or-crowned *Ballad of Narayana*, a Japanese remake of a Japanese classic from 1956. Other prize-winners were the Soviet director Andrej Tarkovsky (*Solaris*), whose elegant *Nostalghia* very poetically bored many people, and Robert Bresson, who shared with his Soviet colleague the best director’s award.

Hanna Schygulla took best actress award for a remarkable performance in an otherwise irritating film about incest (*The Story of Pierra* by Marco Ferreri). Best actor went to Italian Gian-Marie Volonte, who is said to be fatally ill. The Third World was duly acknowledged with a special jury prize to Mrinal Sen of India for *The Case Is Closed*, a didactic work about social responsibility. No American was honored this year, for the first time in 10 years.

The prizes reflect the schizophrenia of the world’s most important film festival, where business is the primary motivation for most people attending, but where art is honored and heralded, but not always watched. After distributing the above prizes on closing night, the audience settled down smugly to watch the American *War Games* and then babble fatuously about the pleasures of Hollywood entertainment and American self-criticism.

My favorite quotation from the festival was an important French critic reassuring a nervous director of Hungarian realism, “Don’t worry. Your press conference went relatively well. Your star didn’t outshine you.”

Karen Jaehne is editor of *Magill’s Survey of the Cinema: Foreign Film*—a six-volume encyclopedia.

## At Berlin

**T**HIS YEAR’S BERLIN FESTIVAL witnessed Great Issues being battled out on the screen: War and Peace, Men and Women, Love and Death, Revolution and Martyrdom—all in an intellectual climate that welcomes such debate. Entertainment is often derided at the Berlin festival. Eric Rohmer found the reception of his small, piquant *Pauline à la Plage* (*Pauline at the Beach*) tepid. The awareness that cinema in the ’80s will have to address itself to many world problems—perhaps for lack of any other public forum—has whetted the appetites of filmmakers and critics alike for political subject matter in films.

To illustrate the ability of the Berlin festival to politicize the benign, Jason Miller, director of *That Championship Season* (in competition in Berlin), complained about the kind of questions inter-viewers posed: “They’re trying to make a Marxist tract out of a jock-movie. Maybe they’ve got a point, but it wasn’t intended as a piece of social-criticism. It’s psychological....” Miller was unaware that in Europe and particularly in Germany the psychological and sociological are inextricably united in theory by now, and that their political implications are the stuff of film criticism and discussion in Berlin.

Berlin film critics have been accused by American producers as well as their compatriots within the festival organization of being intolerant of the non-political film. This may be just an extreme example of the different state of criticism in Europe. In the U.S. we distinguish between newspaper reviewers who “yea” or “nay” a movie according to personal tastes and film critics—that forbidding breed—who at their best give very good reasons for seeing or avoiding a film, or at their worst write only for like-minded cognoscenti. In Europe, newspaper film reviews achieve a critical level eschewed by American editors.

Europeans, and particularly Germans, breathe Marxism. Its impact is felt in all

serious writing, especially the think-pieces that go with film criticism. All the best film critics in Germany have Ph.D.s, the best being Dr. Wolf Donner, who writes for *TIP*, Germany’s *Village Voice*, and is the former director of the Berlin Film Festival—although he denies being a “Marxist.” In Italy, novelist Alberto Moravia reviews films regularly with an intellectual shorthand that constantly invokes topical issues. In France, a reviewer like Michel Ciment tries to keep the public constantly aware of new cinema from the U.S. and feels that he is in a constant struggle against the linguistic and structural theories in vogue there. Scandinavia’s best-known critic is Jan Aghed whose political temper is notoriously short; ideological inconsistencies in films are his favorite topic. All these critics write for daily newspapers and are taken seriously, probably because they take themselves and their task seriously.

Visiting American filmmakers are usually overwhelmed by the profound interpretive impulse in Europe. Larry Schiller, director of *The Executioner’s Song*, found the politicized atmosphere of the Berlin festival intriguing and appropriate to the debate surrounding his film. But, he added, “I think I’m a prisoner of the way the public perceives me.” Radical feminist Lizzie Borden was cheered for *Born in Flames*, her fiction film in documentary style about armed feminist revolution. And the Chicano musical *Zoot Suit* which was largely ignored in the U.S., was featured at the Berlin Forum of Young Cinema (a festival sidebar of great repute).

To judge from some 400 films in Berlin, filmmakers are moving away from the personalized *auteurist* problem dramas and toward larger-than-life issues. The more obvious political issues addressed by Western countries—arms control, women’s rights, Ireland, technocracy—are approached more obliquely in countries where filmmaking is state-controlled and subsidized. The state support of the cinema in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe has been accused of having a stifling and homogenizing effect on their product, but for reasons other than those one expects when dealing with state control. Actually, in parts of Eastern Europe where the metaphor is forced to become the strongest means of expression, films often emerge as riddles or conundrums open to many levels of interpretation—and can be very intriguing at those levels.

The Western European director usually has a greater freedom in determining the “look” and message of his film than an American filmmaker in a studio system. And European filmmakers do like messages and social criticism; they feel that cinema has a function and duty beyond entertainment. But state support of such film in Western countries like West Germany and the Scandinavian lands has produced an unfortunate bumper crop of pedantic and self-righteously experimental films, as young students embark on

Continued on following page



Continued from preceding page features.

Because subsidies are guaranteed and little control is exercised in Scandinavia beyond the institution as producer and distributor, many well-meaning but boring films get made. In contrast, in Eastern Europe, where a certain kind of censorship is exercised because the government has a vested interest in controlling all media, the political risks seem to whet the appetites and sharpen the focus of the filmmakers. Subtlety and ambiguity have great value in Eastern European cinema.

One of the most interesting films in Berlin was from Yugoslavia—*Red Boogie*—about jazz enthusiasts winning out over the new regime's attempts to suppress the music. As unpleasant a conclusion as it may be, subsidized films facing no political risks yield more mediocre product than in those places where authorities keep a sharp eye on "meaning."

For instance, interest in the New German Cinema has waned as the films have reached that plateau of platitudes about society and life. Fassbinder was virtually the only director to work outside the subsidy system, because his scripts were controversial and he worked faster than the committee system made decisions. By the time they turned down his project, he could have the film "in the can."

#### Germany's latest.

Nevertheless, Fassbinder's disappointing last film *Querelle* could not tarnish the memory of *Veronika Voss*, which won the Golden Bear for best film in 1982. The many portraits and documentaries of Fassbinder featured at the Berlin festival only emphasized the irreplaceable status he held in the New German Cinema and the elusive knack he had for turning melodrama into politics—and vice-versa.

The latest crop of German films are radical and outrageous, but often exasperating. Margarethe von Trotta's *Heller Wahn* (A Labor of Love) is about the ineffable love that springs up between an

"emancipated" woman and a psychotic and suicidal oppressed woman artist. The issues are at the very core of emancipation: should the movement be messianic or simply offer courses in self-help?

*Krieg und Frieden* (War and Peace) was a major event of the Berlin calendar—the latest omnibus film by the German collective of Volker Schlöndorff, Alexander Kluge, Heinrich Boll, Stefan Aust and Axel Engstfeld. Breaking from the traditions established by Tolstoy in which war was inevitable, this anti-narrative, didactic, episodic film is surprisingly entertaining. Amusing vignettes from the summit conference at Versailles never fail to charm us with the humanity of our heads of state. The basic fear and trembling of those being governed, however, reminds one of Germany's utter dependence on Western military strategy.

In absurd dialogs and embarrassingly clichéd discussions before bomb-cellar doors, the filmmakers offer dramatizations of the inexorable nuclear impact, not just on politics, but on the psyche. The documentary footage and facts are relatively well-known; what is new is the way the Germans feel about the "Cubanization" of their country under the auspices of American protection. Their anti-Americanism is balanced by an anti-Prussian thread of Alexander Kluge's expose of the kind of thinking the German military strategist Clausewitz left to the world.

Politics between the two Germanys was reflected in Reinhard Hauff's *Der Mann auf der Mauer* (The Man on the Wall), a low-key comedy about a man who has managed to emigrate from East Berlin by feigning insanity and now must find some kind of sanity in the corruption of the West. Straddling the political, social and sexual barriers between East and West turns him into a Berlin equivalent of a tight-rope artist on the Wall.

Wim Wender's latest film *Der Stand der Dinge* (The State of Things) gropes around in the desperation of a filmmaker who has more to say than his budget will allow for, and wanting to say it in a lan-

guage (filmic, so to speak) that nobody speaks. Concern about American cultural colonialism is a common German theme, most often found in scenes focusing on parking lots and wheeled vehicles. It has, furthermore, created a virtual genre of German Americana, as innumerable German filmmakers incorporate a trip to the States into their subsidy budgets.

The flipside of Wender's hit proved to be more entertaining and devastating. Rosa von Praunheim's *Stadt der Verlorenen Seele* (City of Lost Souls) is a musical comedy about Americans in Berlin, butchering the language, basking in the "kulchuh," playing at cabaret life and cross-sexual polination. (A transsexual falls in love with a lesbian.) It is a well-structured, scripted and scathing portrait of hopelessly funny Americans in self-imposed exile.

#### Exiles of Nazi years.

A vastly different set of exiles was the subject of this year's retrospective program, a total of 46 films from the thespians who tried to pursue their careers in exile during the Third Reich. Although the festival organizers denied it, this seemed to be an attempt to offer a portrait of those who chose a role other than that of the character in *Mephisto*, which captured the world's attention and an Oscar with its portrayal of a collaborator. Little or nothing was said of Gustav Grundgens, upon whom the character in *Mephisto* is based. Questions about him elicited irritation and silence.

The erotic fascination with fascism still seems to dominate the cinema of Alain Robbe-Grillet (scriptwriter of *Marienbad*), who has adopted the shiny, molded surfaces of the *Diva* look for *La Belle Captive*, a film about symbolic dreams and shackled sex, full of cultural allegory. Although Robbe-Grillet's name has always been at the fore of narrative theory, this film is not really innovative in its adaptation of Magritte's famous painting by the same name to the moving picture genre. Like most of the films this year (perhaps for this decade), *La Belle Captive* seems to be addressing itself to greater issues than one person's sado-masochistic dream. It is a film about Women and Men and Bondage—in short, about love.

Chris Marker, whose political work in the French underground prefigured his great reputation as an essayist and documentary filmmaker, offered *Sunless*, a pictorial fugue about cultures at the most extreme points of survival: computer-operated Japan is filtered through computer-generated images and is contrasted with an Africa whose wildlife appears primeval. Nature looks vulnerable and yet savagely defensive in the face of Technology and Culture, as Marker portrays the global ideological conflict.

Less avant-garde but equally political is Andrzej Wajda's film *Danton*, which showed up quite unexpectedly for a midnight screening at the festival. Made in Paris, the film concerns the conflict between the French revolutionaries Danton and Robespierre, reflecting a revolution

betrayed by the bourgeois ambitions of elitist governing principles. The tragic figure of Danton, played by Gerard Depardieu, attempts to force the issue by challenging the revolutionaries running the committees and is himself tried and sentenced in a mockery of judicial procedure. Wajda has not offered a subtle or historically fastidious portrait of Danton; it is expressionistic and reflective of his own attitude about the changes in Poland.

Ingmar Bergman has made children the central figures of his final film (he claims) *Fanny and Alexander*, a drama set in a turn-of-the-century bourgeois family. The Swedish agony, in which Bergman has specialized, is reduced to a more materialistic basis when the children's mother marries again and leaves the luxurious, gentle and frolicking household for the austere monastery where the village pastor lives with his even more austere sister and some nuns. Through the children Bergman contrasts piety with gayety, Protestant repression with bourgeois indulgence, the devil with lust, and portrays "innocent" children as both victims and persecutors in these conflicts.

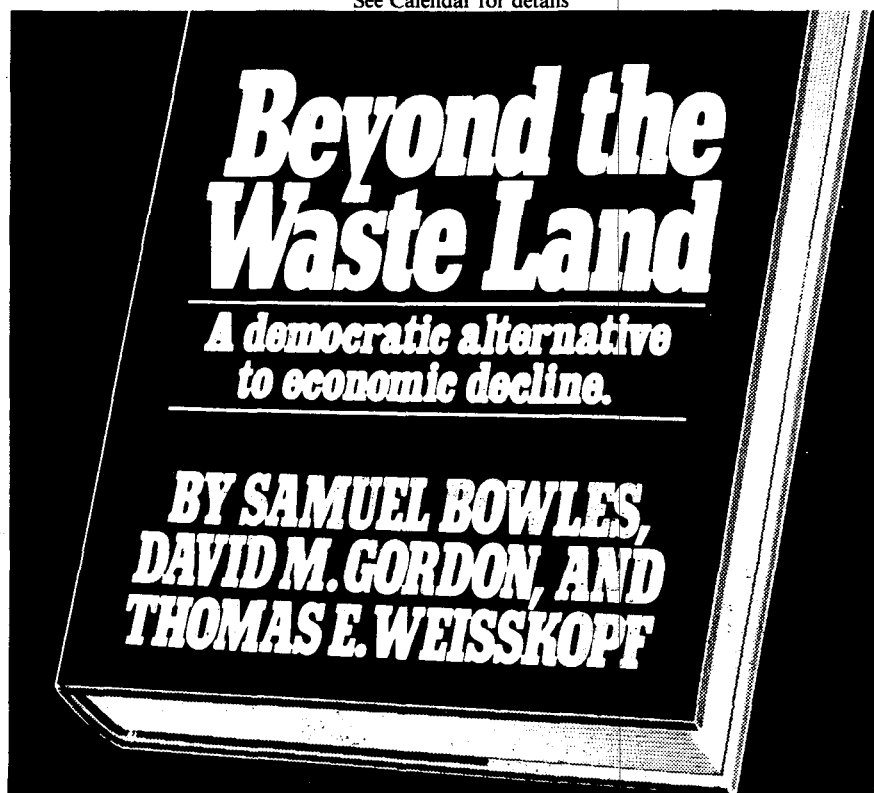
#### Subtitles revival.

Last winter *Time* magazine led off an article about foreign films by announcing that it is once more time to read subtitles, because foreign films have something to say. As distinct to the dominant American product aimed at the teeny-bopper public, European films dare to address issues about love, life—even education in the wake of 1968 consciousness, as Bertrand Tavernier did in *Une Semaine des Vacances* (A Week's Vacation). Of course, *Gandhi* is the most obvious example of a film that, like *Chariots of Fire* the year before, swept through the U.S. precisely because of its appeal to the intelligentsia, and was crowned by Hollywood, who would never have had the guts to produce it.

The foreign films now moving on the art-house circuit are being watched, as they always have been, by students. But a new audience is developing from the ranks of former students and people not content with cable-vision—people who influence opinion and expectations in the U.S. Within the distributing arm of the film industry, it is so well-known that the upper-middle-class in the U.S. is hungry for foreign product, that dozens of little companies are springing up to deal the next hand.

From a brief survey of the films at Berlin, it is clear what kind of stakes foreign film producers are playing with: long on message, short on budget. But if there are further budget and subsidy cut-backs in other nations, then there will not only be a shortage of films but probably a homogenizing effect, as fewer films aim for a larger public. Without the stimulus of these films from abroad, Americans might find their imaginations stifled and their vision of themselves as part of a larger world blacked out. International values and points-of-view are essential for a healthy perspective on world problems, and their greatest impact are often through film. ■

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# LETTERS

*In These Times* is an independent newspaper committed to democratic pluralism and to helping build a popular movement for socialism in the United States. Our pages are open to a wide range of views on the left, both socialist and non-socialist. Except for editorial statements appearing on the editorial page, opinions expressed in columns and in feature or news stories are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the editors. We welcome comments and opinion pieces from our readers.

## IN SOLIDARITY

WE ARE ARTISTS, INTELLECTUALS, trade-unionists, religious leaders and political people active in the progressive movements in the U.S. Some of us spend much of our time working within the peace movement. It is our profound conviction that intellectual and artistic freedom, the freedom to organize democratic movements without official interference, and to communicate openly, are essential if humanity is ever to progress to a just and peaceful world.

It is with much disquiet that we hear of plans in Poland to put on trial former members of the Workers Defense Council (KOR), as well as several leaders of the trade union Solidarity. These persons have already served 14 months in prison camps and prisons without charges being brought against them. They stand for the same principles of social justice, peace, freedom and human and workers' rights that we do. They should be immediately released.

The sentencing of these individuals would be seized on by the most reactionary elements in our own society to justify their own retrogressive social and Cold War policies. We oppose any persecution of these individuals, our fellow human beings, and ask for their release as well as the release of all others who have been imprisoned in Poland for their union activities.

### —Campaign for Peace and Democracy East and West

Edward Asner, Steven M. Becker, Jack Berkowitz, Muriel Buttinger, Peter J. Camarata, Noam Chomsky, Rev. John Collins, Rep. John Conyers, Darlene Cuccinello, Gail Daneker, Rep. Ronald V. Dellums, Barbara Ehrenreich, Norman Eisner, Daniel Ellsberg, Dierdre English, Alexander Erlich, Carol Bernstein Ferry, W.H. Ferry, Carlos Fuentes, Victor Gotbaum, Michael Harrington, Richard Healey, Grace Hane Hedemann, Adam Hochschild, Janet & Michael Jendrzyszczak, Charles Knight, Maggie Kuhn, Betty Lall, Joanne Landy, Sidney Lens, Jonathan Lorch, Manning Marable, Raymond Majerus, Paul Mayer, David McReynolds, Seymour Melman, Sam Meyers, Holly Near, Grace Paley, Marcus Raskin, Paul Robeson Jr., Edward Said, Janet Shenk, William Smith, Pam Solo, Eric Stern, I.F. Stone, Paul M. Sweezy, Ida Torres, Andrzej Tymowski, Mary Anne Vincent, Jim Wallis, William A. Winpisinger, Max & Sylvia Wohl, Anne B. Zill

## FEED THE HUNGRY

THANK YOU FOR YOUR RECENT ARTICLE concerning the Emergency Food Security Reserve. The politics of using the reserve have been distorted somewhat and your article helps to clarify the issues. However, I feel that Bread for the World's position was slightly misrepresented and would like to take this opportunity to clarify our position.

The article correctly notes that the motivating factor behind the domestic commodity distribution legislation is a way to dispose of government surpluses of agricultural commodities, in a way that benefits hungry people. Bread for the World does not oppose such efforts to link feeding hungry people with other issues, unless the consequences of such a link adversely affect other groups. This is the case when the Emergency Food Security Reserve is included in this legislation. When I stated that, "the primary goal isn't to feed hungry people," I was pointing to the main impe-

tus behind the bill, namely to dispose of government surpluses. In the case of wheat this surplus does not exist. Given this fact, wheat should not be included in the bill, or if it is, it should be purchased from the market where the real surplus exists. We, and other groups, lobbied extensively for an amendment to this effect which was defeated in committee on May 5.

Bread for the World believes that opposition to use of the reserve and support for an amendment to purchase wheat is the only position we can take if this bill is to be turned around and called a bill to benefit hungry people in this country.

—Timothy Yeaney

Issues Analyst for Food Security  
Bread for the World, Washington, D.C.

## ROBOTICS

BILL MEINDERS (LETTERS, *ITT*, MAY 27) is critical of my assertion that "the issue of robotics and the labor process involves the structure of control over this technology"—a perspective that he considers "right in step with our society's reverence for technological development." Instead Meinders says, "Let us strive for some control over the structure of technology as well as over the structure of its control."

Meinders seems to suggest, and perhaps rightly, that workers cannot remedy the enormous social dislocations caused by the implantation of robots into the labor process by simply taking control of existing technology. He sees my position as too mechanistic. And he is making a broader point, that workers cannot simply take over the control levers of the technological apparatus created by the capitalist system to transform their condition.

My assumption is that workers in control of robotic technology will also be in control of production in general. Presumably workers in control of production will accept certain aspects of capitalism's technology and reject others (nuclear power, for example) in directing technological development toward satisfaction of human needs rather than the needs of profitability.

Meinders loses sight of the fact that robotics are not ultimately responsible for the displacement of workers; this is caused by the social relations of production under capitalism. In fact, robotics, like many capitalist technologies, has a contradictory character. The technology does offer possibilities for freeing industrial workers from hazardous work. Unfortunately, within the context of capitalism, this means the freedom to be unemployed.

I do not believe that there is an inherently diabolical character to robotic technology and I refer Meinders to David Noble's excellent article on "Social Choice in Machine Design" on this point. But a productive system that allows labor-saving technology such as robotics to create misery for laborers is diabolical. The remedy to this involves the question of who controls production and technology. Control over the structure of technology is part of this issue.

—Gary Fields  
Chicago

## GREAT WHITE MYTHS

I THOUGHT IN THESE TIMES WAS TOO politically sophisticated to advocate the old view that the course of history is shaped by the one Great Man; particularly if that one Great Man is also

the Great White Hope, responsible for advancing the future destiny of people of color. But Chuck Fager's article (*ITT*, May 18) on the World War II incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans in U.S. concentration camps treats a very important issue in this very shallow context.

Herbert Nicholson may have played an important role in opposing the evacuation and incarceration of Japanese Americans. But so did many others, including Japanese Americans themselves. Allies outside the Japanese American community were important for morale, but most allies were so far removed from the traditional bases of power in mainstream U.S. society that the responsibility for responding to the concentration camps fell largely on the Japanese American community itself. One group of Japanese Americans fought evacuation through the legal system, up to the Supreme Court. Some engaged in defiant behavior within the camps. Others worked to oppose the camps through one of the few options open to them, by attempting to prove their loyalty through participation in the 442nd battalion, and the educational or work release programs.

In addition to Nicholson, allies of the Japanese American community in this trying time included Socialist Party leader and pacifist Norman Thomas, Dorothy Day of the Catholic Workers, John Nevin Sayre and John Swomley of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a few rare CIO leaders and other Quaker Friends.

In *These Times* readers might be interested in knowing that the contemporary Japanese American community is pursuing active campaigns for redress and reparations. The National Coalition for Japanese American Redress has filed a lawsuit seeking claims. The Japanese American Citizens League and the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations (NCRP) are following a legislative strategy. NCRP goals include a \$50,000 individual reparation and a community development fund to compensate the Japanese American community for some of the massive losses suffered during the World War II evacuation and incarceration.

—Angie Fa  
Santa Barbara, Calif.

## HELL OF AN IDEA

A FEW ISSUES BACK YOU RAN ONE OF your regular left-celebrity testimonials above a subscription ad, and I believe it was Pete Seeger recommending that we ask our local librarian to order *In These Times*. I'm an assistant

to the reference librarian at an extremely small college in a small community in New Mexico, and I thought that Seeger's suggestion was a hell of an idea. Unfortunately, budget cuts at both the state and federal levels have forced the library to cancel many subscriptions, so the hope of picking up any others is pretty slim. In the meantime, I've started donating my copies to the library—perhaps a few more people will be exposed to them. By the way, *In These Times* was hung right next to *Human Events* on the newspaper racks, purely in alphabetical coincidence.

I've tried to interest some of my friends in *ITT*, but in four years I've had only two takers. Tending toward the left in a small southwestern town can be a lonely business; most of my friends don't read past the word "socialist" in your subheading on the second page. I guess all that I'm trying to say is that even though I don't have much extra cash to send when you need it, I'll do what I can to help in other ways. Keep up the good work.

—Keith West  
Silver City, N.M.

## REASONABLE CHARGE?

SEVERAL WEEKS AGO I CHARGED that Diana Johnstone followed a neo-Nazi line when she minimized the holocaust, urged that Klaus Barbie not be prosecuted and insinuated that terrorist attacks against French synagogues were really a Zionist plot to win sympathy for Jews.

I didn't think it was an unreasonable charge, particularly in the context of her frequently expressed hatred of Israel and "Zionists."

My letter provoked a small storm of letters. A neo-logician took one sentence out of my letter and said that one example did not a neo-Nazi make. I agree.

Another said I didn't know the French word, "deportees." I know.

A third chose to respond by screaming about Israel. Does the fact that Israel sometimes acts like the U.S., or even, God forbid, like some of its Arab neighbors, make it okay to kill Jewish children in France—or to let Klaus Barbie go scot-free?

—Seymour Posner  
New York

*Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.*

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## SHANGHAI JOURNAL

# Intellectuals, women, and the future of China

By Henry Rosemont Jr.

**X**IE XIDE WAS BORN IN Fujian Province in 1921. After completing undergraduate studies at Xiamen University she went to the U.S. for graduate work in physics, earning an M.A. from Smith (1949) and a Ph.D. from MIT (1951), after which she returned to China via England "to work for the reconstruction of her homeland after Liberation."

She began teaching at Fudan University and assisted in the creation and development of a physics research institute there. In 1956 she joined the Communist Party.

At the beginning of the "Cultural Revolution" she was denounced, and spent much of the next decade cut off from her research work, under house arrest, scrubbing floors and struggling against cancer. After being "rehabilitated" she was appointed vice-president at Fudan in 1978, assuming major administrative duties in addition to her teaching and research. She began organizing a new research institute of modern physics, focusing on surface physics.

In recognition of her manifold accomplishments she has been elected to the Presidium of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and in 1981 was awarded honorary degrees from Smith and the City College of New York. The following year she was one of only 11 women elected to full membership on the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, and in February of this year became the first woman to head a Chinese university when she assumed the presidency of Fudan.

The following are excerpts from several conversations with this remarkable woman.

Since the fall of the "Gang of Four" many changes have taken place in China. How does it feel to have gone from being an object of general scorn to one of the highest-ranking woman officials?

Many thousands of people, not only intellectuals, were humiliated and suffered hardships during the so-called "Cultural Revolution." Many broke under the strain. Suicides were common. The times were twisted then, not only at Fudan or other universities, but throughout the entire country. Of course, the memories of that period will not be forgotten easily, but I do not believe history will repeat itself. As for my present position, I do not think of it in "career" terms; I am honored, excited and humbled at the prospect of working to build a better future for China.

Not everyone is as confident as you are that history will not repeat itself, nor that China's economic future is necessarily bright. What are the grounds for your optimism?

Let me begin with economics. Although not an economist, I am optimistic that the "Four Modernizations" campaign [Industry, Agriculture, Defense and Science, Technology and Education] can succeed, for several reasons. First, both the sixth five-year plan—the short term—and the long term economic programs now underway were subjected to the study of many more people than ever before with economic planning.

All of these plans were published, widely discussed and modified until

agreement was reached that these are the best policies for our present condition. Moreover, the agreement was reached because everyone believes those plans are realistic; they are not merely reactions to the turmoil produced by the policies of the Gang of Four. On the contrary, our entire history since 1949 was carefully examined and criticized in the process of planning our economic future from now until the year 2000.

Yet these plans call for quadrupling production in just 20 years; surely an ambitious goal. China's countryside is still underdeveloped by any standards, including Chinese urban standards. Shanghai is already China's major producer, on a par, perhaps, with several other Asian metropolitan areas. It accounts for one-

difficult, but I am confident it can be done.

Unemployment is currently the major economic problem plaguing the industrial democracies, and while everyone acknowledges that unemployment also exists in China, no one seems to know how extensive it is. In the course of discussing this issue with the economics editor of Wen Hui Bao, he told me that while urban unemployment in China was still a problem, it was actually less of a problem now than in the late '70s, when tens of thousands of people who had been sent to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution returned to their homes without jobs. Government encouragement and assistance for the development of individual and small group enterprises, plus encouraging older workers to take early retirement, have mitigated unemployment in areas like Shanghai, he said. Do you agree?

Yes, basically. Any unemployment is a problem, of course, but I do not believe it is a major problem in China today.

After attending the 12th Party Congress last September, you said that the Party had to regain its authority. How is this being done?

First, a major reorganization of the Party administration has been going on since last summer, and is expected to be com-

mitted criminal acts must be tried in the courts. Ascertaining these matters is the task of the discipline inspection teams.

But many people did wrong things during the Cultural Revolution because they mistakenly believed in the policies of that period. I do not want to pass over the extent of the excesses committed even by those who were not acting out of selfish motives; and such people will not be given increased responsibilities either in the Party or in the government. But large-scale recriminations would serve no useful purpose now. Our task is to build for the future, not take vengeance for the past.

Yet the wounds of the past have not healed: caution is the watchword among many people, coupled with cynicism. Surely these Party reorganizational efforts cannot of themselves solve the more deeply rooted problems of morale.

Of course not. Reforming the Party and government administration is only a first step, although it is a very important one. You are correct in saying that problems of morale are deeply rooted. From the early days of the Anti-Japanese War all the way through to the early '60s, revolutionary Communist ideology was clear and correct for Chinese conditions, selfless devotion to the cause of the Chinese



From Cultural Revolution outcast to university president, Central Committee member Xie Xide: "I do not believe history will repeat itself."

eighth of China's total productivity. Do you really think it can be producing four times as much by the turn of the century? The municipality of Shanghai is self-sufficient in food. Agricultural productivity has increased many times over since Liberation, but the limits have just about been reached. Certainly Shanghai cannot expect to grow four times as much food as it does now. But the city can expand greatly in other areas, especially in light industry and, to a lesser extent, in heavy industry, energy and other areas.

As the responsibility system moves ahead and local units have more autonomy, we are already seeing significant increases in industrial output, not only in Shanghai but throughout the country, including the countryside. And joint ventures with foreign corporations continue to move forward, too, on a basis of mutual benefit.

To achieve our goals by the year 2000, the yearly average increase in productivity must be approximately 7.2 percent. It is realistic to assume that an increase of about 4 percent can be achieved each year for the next several years, which should provide a base large enough to generate increases of 8-9 percent during the 1990s. If this is accomplished, China will indeed have quadrupled its production by the end of the century. The task is long and

pleted by June. An important change has already been implemented with the creation of a National Advisory Commission, made up of newly retired senior cadres. Similar Commissions at the provincial Party level are also being established. These commissions are only temporary institutions, but will serve two important purposes for the time being: they provide a means for younger cadres to be moved into positions of responsibility and they allow the Party to continue to benefit from the experience of retired cadres.

Discipline inspection programs have also been going on at all levels of the Party, and they will be ongoing. Some members have already been dropped from the Party, others have been—or will be—placed on probation for two years and still others will maintain their present standing or will be given new responsibilities, depending on their accomplishments.

Does this mean that the most vocal and active Party supporters of the Gang of Four have been—or will be—expelled, punished?

In general, no. A massive "purge" neither has, nor should, take place. Of course, those people who persecuted others for purposes of self-advancement cannot be kept in the Party, and those who

people was the norm and a strong revolutionary spirit existed among and between Communist and non-Communist revolutionaries. But since that time things have gotten "mixed up," for several reasons. This is a complicated matter. It will take time to correct.

Earlier you mentioned the introduction of the responsibility system as an essential element of the current economic programs. In reading official government statements, it often seems to me that "responsibility system" and "individual initiative" are used interchangeably. Both are akin in meaning to "entrepreneurial skills" which is in turn a semantic cousin of "profit motive." This has manifold ideological implications.

Since Liberation we have become a proud people once again, and our material lives have improved considerably. But as you well know, the standard of living in China is still very low, and raising that standard for a billion people is very difficult. Raising it equitably is even more difficult. The responsibility system is being expanded because it has reduced unemployment and led to major increases in productivity and consumption. It has also been introduced in the bureaucracy in an effort to cut down on needless "red tape" and to restore efficiency at all lev-



els of administration.

Of course, the system of economic incentives must be kept within reasonable limits. That is why the government statements to which you refer also stress the importance of developing our civilization spiritually as well as materially. People must be willing to accept responsibility on grounds of socialist principles as well as for improving their standard of living.

*I agree that economic reality in China is still harsh, and that raising the standard of living should therefore have the highest priority in making policy. But part of my question is still unanswered. In terms of socialist principles, what is to prevent the responsibility system from getting out of hand? By whom and in what ways will material incentives be kept within "reasonable limits" so that the Chinese economy does not become another more or less welfare state capitalist system?*

Implicit in your question is a correct statement. Striking and maintaining a balance between material and nonmaterial incentives and values is not easy—for anyone. At the same time, China cannot become "just like" any other country or system; our size, history and population are too different.

As for our becoming capitalist in some form, I do not think that is possible. Capitalism is based fundamentally on the exploitation of labor, and it is illegal for one or more persons to employ others here. New enterprises begun either in the cities or the countryside must be sponsored by existing units of production, equal work is required of everyone and all profits must be shared equally among the workers in the enterprise.

That is not capitalism. Further, it is the task of the Party to provide exemplary and collective leadership in monitoring the continued development of the responsibility system.

Of course, these measures will not guarantee that purely selfish profit motives do not gain prominence in China. Only education can do that. We must show the young generation the truth of the values held by the workers, peasants, intellectuals and soldiers who carried forward the Revolution during the '30s, '40s and '50s. It was a commitment to Chinese socialism, not selfishness, that motivated people during those long and hard years of struggle, and it is only through education that we can recapture that spirit, those values.

*A statement fully in consonance with what Smith College said of you when conferring an honorary doctorate: "You are that rare blend of researcher and beloved teacher in the classroom...." Clearly, you yourself still retain the spirit and values of which you just spoke. But just as clearly, to me at least, a number of your academic colleagues and other intellectuals do not. Their lives have been hard lives, not only during the Cultural Revolution, but ever since Liberation. Many have been humiliated, persecuted, incarcerated. They have a low status, they are poorly paid and the scars of their suffering run deep. No one knows this better than yourself, and you must know as well that your faith and hope are not shared equally by all your peers. Education cannot be of much help here.*

Part of your statement is misleading. When you say that Chinese intellectuals have led hard lives ever since Liberation you are implying that their lives were better before Liberation. But for many intellectuals this was not true. The people of my father's generation—especially those who studied in the West—were often not provided with good conditions for teaching or research, and their salaries were low; the lives of many Chinese intellectuals actually improved after 1949.

Once again—how many times have I said this?—we are facing a long and difficult task. It is underway. Intellectuals are being recognized for their work more frequently than at any other time since 1949, and as their accomplishments are publicized, more and more people are realizing that the work of intellectuals is essential for the material and spiritual development of Chinese socialist civilization. That is a good sign.

**"New enterprises begun in the cities or countryside must be sponsored by existing units of production, equal work is required of everyone and all profits must be shared equally among the workers. That is not capitalism."**

Second, our new constitution provides more safeguards for individuals than the constitutions of the past, and the rapid development of our legal system shows that the provisions of the new constitution are, and will be, strictly enforced. As you know, almost every day the newspapers and radio present materials dealing with different aspects of the new legal system. Further, more universities are developing programs to train lawyers. Here at Fudan the program in law is currently a part of the International Politics Department, but beginning this fall, it will become an independent department, with its own curriculum, degree and more students.

Intellectuals are also being aided and encouraged financially. Their salaries have just been increased at all levels. They are also being urged, under the responsibility system, to offer their skills on a consulting basis to different work and neighborhood units. These skills range from helping a factory design a new piece of equipment to offering English-language instruction to workers to designing landscapes or painting murals in local neighborhood living areas. In all of this consulting work the relationship is determined solely by the parties involved; it is a private arrangement in each case. I am personally pleased by these developments for they allow intellectuals to benefit, while also benefitting and not exploiting others.

By American standards these material benefits will not appear great, and here we can see another dimension both to the question of morale among the intelligentsia and the question of limits on economic incentives. Chinese intellectuals know that many people in the U.S. and other industrialized countries earn 30 to 40 times as much money each year than they do for the same work, with the same background, education and experience. Even when the higher costs of living in industrial countries are taken into account, the disparity is very large and will remain large for quite some time. This is a morale problem in itself.

#### Women in China.

*I would like to hear your views on the status of women in China.*

The roles and status of women in China have changed and improved dramatically since 1949. Before Liberation women were virtually slaves, as everyone knows. Much more remains to be done, of course, and there is no harm in comparing the present with a future ideal, so

long as we also compare the present with the very real past, to maintain perspective.

*Is forward momentum being sustained? It is now more than a third of a century since the People's Republic was established, yet in addition to yourself there are only 10 women on the Party Central Committee—out of 210—and only one woman holds a seat on the Politburo.*

There are not enough women occupying senior positions of responsibility, but it takes time to achieve proportionate representation at this level. All government and Party offices are being urged strongly to take on more women, and progress is being made. Right here at Fudan, for example, you can see for yourself that there are many women in senior faculty and administrative positions—many more, I think, than you will find in American universities.

Politically and legally, women enjoy equal rights with men, and at work they earn equal wages. Each woman can be given a year's maternity leave with full pay and is encouraged to spend that time improving her education and skills while caring for her baby, with her family's help.

The basic problem is social. Old feudal ways of thinking have not disappeared, especially in the countryside. With the campaign to limit families to one child—which is absolutely essential for us—there are more reports of female infanticide in the countryside, which is horrible. Once again, I believe that the only full solution to this problem lies in education. Schooling must be upgraded in every part of the country, the old superstitions and prejudices overcome.

I should add that I also believe there are basic differences between men and women, differences that cannot be ignored. In many areas of work, of course, there should be no differentiation: cafeterias, universities, offices and so on employ equal numbers of men and women. In steel mills, however, preference is given to men, and in textile plants, to women. The work is hard in both cases, but most jobs in steel mills are more strenuous than in textile plants, and men perform those jobs more efficiently than women, with less harm to their bodies.

*That's a perspective usually associated in the U.S. with those of a decidedly conservative bent. Would you elaborate on this?*

I am certainly not suggesting that women should not enjoy equal rights with men, nor am I suggesting that women do not work hard at their jobs. The allocation of labor and rewards, however, is a complicated matter. Deciding the number of hours each person should work, for instance, or the number of work points each job should earn, or the number of grain coupons assigned monthly to each job—these are not easy decisions to make, especially as our supplies and resources are still limited a great deal. If it is a fact that a woman will use up fewer calories in a day than a man doing the same job, the man must be allotted more grain coupons each month if he is to retain his health.

#### Nuclear arms.

*Quickly to a final question, addressed to a physicist: nukes?*

Nuclear weapons? Of course, they are terrible, and we must have disarmament; no one can win a nuclear war. But disarmament cannot involve only a few countries—it must be worldwide. And I do not see that happening, unfortunately, in the near future. Until it does, China must keep her weapons for self-protection.

Nuclear energy is a different matter. Making nuclear power plants safe is a technical problem, or rather, a series of technical problems. I believe they can be solved. China, as you know, is now building its first nuclear power plant in eastern Zhejiang Province near Shanghai, and we will have to have many of them if we are to become an industrialized nation. Research in solar, wind and water energy should go forward, but I do not think China's energy needs can be met from these sources alone, nor from fossil fuels. We must have nuclear energy plants. The task is to make them safe. I believe this can be achieved.

*Henry Rosemont teaches philosophy at Fudan University in Shanghai.*

*Xie Xide also discussed several topics in the field of higher education, which will be included in a future installment of "Shanghai Journal."*

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## INPRINT

## CULTURE



The Lone Ranger and other heroes embody positive aspects of the state while maintaining a frontiersmanlike individualism.

## Pop literature: hi-ho status quo

**The Empire's Old Clothes: What the Lone Ranger, Babar and other innocent heroes do to our minds**

By Ariel Dorfman  
Pantheon Books, 223 pp.  
\$6.95 (paper)

**Widows**

By Ariel Dorfman  
Pantheon Books, 146 pp., \$11.95

By Pat Aufderheide

These two books address, in very different ways, similar concerns about the shaping of popular consciousness. The first, a collection of essays, analyzes the hidden themes of commercial "subliterature" such as comic books. The second, a novel, attempts an alternative to factory-made myths for our time.

*The Empire's Old Clothes* is one of the best examples of engaged essay writing on popular culture to emerge since the insouciant first flourish of *New Journalism*, which was accompanied by sharp and often self-righteous critiques from the New Left. This book draws on the best aspects of both—it has intellectual passion along with a love for both the material and the audience. Inviting readers to join him in a "long—and mischievous—look at these cultural products," Dorfman focuses on the children's books, Disney comics, Lone Ranger stories, *Reader's Digest* and a Chilean comic book. He finds in such supposedly disposable commodities a wealth of weighty themes: race and culture, self-image, the modern citizen, and even foreign policy of the U.S.

For Dorfman, these products are all items in a half-century-long trajectory in popular culture. They are agents in the post-Depression shaping of popular consciousness, both within the U.S.

and beyond, wherever the empire of information has reached.

Dorfman also finds that these products serve a distinct function: to resolve, in an imitation of art, what is irresolvable in life. When the Lone Ranger or a superhero fixes up the world without changing it, when the Disney ducks come across magically produced treasure, when the *Reader's Digest's* unforgettable characters improve themselves endlessly without touching the terms of their world, they deliver happy endings to readers who have none of their own.

### Outside looking in.

Dorfman, a Chilean exile, has every reason to be curious about

the effects of popular culture. He has been looking at it as an outsider-insider for a long time. A well-known writer and cultural critic during the Allende years, he wrote (with Armand Mattelart) the controversial sociological analysis *How to Read Donald Duck*. He was also involved in projects to create noncommercial populist popular literature. Dorfman was well-suited to his task of interpreting (and changing) the terms of American culture for a Chilean audience. He had spent 10 childhood years in New York, happily inundated with the products he now analyzes in *The Empire's Old Clothes*. After the Pinochet coup in 1973, he and his family went into exile in Europe,

until three years ago when they moved to the U.S. Most of the essays began, in fact, as shorter and more strident pieces written for Chileans. Now, rewritten for an American audience, they were also expanded and reworked.

Dorfman takes apart a text with dexterity and—despite an easygoing writing style—incisiveness. These essays are not, how-

**The Empire's Old Clothes is fine writing on pop culture.**

## Ariel Dorfman: bereaved exile

By Pat Aufderheide

*In your essays in The Empire's Old Clothes you mention the gap between the alienated quality of most modern fiction and the forced resolutions of commercial pop literature.*

I think that one of the main problems of literature today is how to resolve this question: how can you write something that speaks of the problems of our time deeply, that opens up reality, and do it in a way that the people who are used to mass culture will understand, accept it and liberate their feelings along with you? In Latin America, Gabriel Garcia Marquez has solved the problem.

*Is that what you wanted to do*

*with Widows?*

I think so. But in fact the novel got away from me. I wrote it to be in the bestseller tradition—no experimentation, no stream of consciousness, a plot, a protagonist. I was trying to deal with people in the real world.

I probably thought of creating a modern myth at the beginning, but I seem not to have the talent or the character for doing that. Reality is too much a problem for me. I drew on legends and traditions, like *Antigone* and *The Trojan Women* and the myth of Prometheus, but the real inspiration was a poem I had written on the confrontation of women and men. In a sense, women are the center of Latin American politics. Things have not changed in Latin America, because of what

the women are and what the men have made of the women—both less and more than full human beings.

What I was trying to do was to break the stereotypes. I took this person who politically I despise, this turncoat, and I wrote his love story into it. This is a guy who would torture me if I were in Chile, but I wanted to give him humanity, because otherwise I wouldn't be able to write. Politically I will judge people, but literarily I must allow them all their humanity—and I think that makes it even worse what they've done.

*Do you think that mythmaking is something to avoid?*

No. But I think one of the political problems of the left is that we create wonderful myths and then become captured by them. In order to change reality, you have to believe that people are heroic. You have to believe in the idea of Prometheus, in the Titan, you have to believe that the people, all of them together, are invincible. On the other hand, this same myth can become congealed and freeze into the notion of a prole-

ever, the familiar charges against rot-your-mind mass culture that so often make reading left cultural criticism a predictable chore. While Dorfman attributes immense power to commercialized popular culture, he also approaches it with a sympathy for its appeal that allows him to find more in it than the usual discovery that commercial culture reveals the terms of commerce.

In his essay on the *Reader's Digest*, Dorfman considers how the *Digest* defines knowledge. Whatever else, knowledge here is not power. It is not "de-stabilizing." Knowing something will not require taking any action—in fact, quite the reverse. The *Reader's Digest* promises a daily dose of information as a preventive therapy, to keep values and beliefs tidily in place. Dorfman calls it "a tourist guidebook for the geography of ignorance."

### History halted.

This isn't the only place where Dorfman finds that history has stopped, where values are eternal and stability is the natural order of things. In all these cultural products, messy, contradiction-riddled history has been abolished. In the Babar books, a naked African savage elephant makes a painless transition to kinghood, clothes and civilization with the help of the "Old Lady"—the emblem of Western culture—and he goes to live in Celesteville, where all historical epochs merge in an eternal rule of paternalism.

In the Disney adventures, history never existed. The ducks skip from barbarism to civilization and back in their adventures, using commerce as the great equalizer. The Lone Ranger, that dependable righter of wrongs, is "an answer to a permanent emergency," a constant returner of things to the *status quo ante*.

The Lone Ranger and other superheroes, Dorfman recalls, arose during the Depression, with an obvious appeal to citizens who saw themselves as hapless victims of anonymous market forces. Further, the superhero embodied the positive aspects of the state while maintaining heroic frontiersmanlike individualism, leaving the negative aspects to the clumsy but well-intentioned police forces.

But times change, in life if not in the comics. The Lone Ranger has become passe, and recent superhero movies have satirized

tarian hero, into an uncritical vision that nothing can go wrong, which destroys or at least damages your ability to change.

*How do you hope that Widows brings about change?*

I hope this brings people in the U.S. nearer to people who are "outside history," because this is their story. I wanted to create more consciousness of both the distance from Latin America and the nearness to the humanity of Latin America.

*In The Empire's Old Clothes you analyze the messages imbedded in mass cultural products. But the people who typically read them are unlikely to read your criticisms.*

I have thought about this since I began writing the essays. In Latin America, an intellectual has two audiences—a very small, reduced group of people who may or may not read him, and a vast range of illiterate or semi-literate people. In the U.S. the writer does not think that the second group is the moving force of history; in Latin America we—the writers—do. They have been left



their subjects. Dorfman argues that the time for heroes that guarantee the forces of law and order may be past. If people once wondered if they could weather their personal crises, they now wonder if society-wide problems have any solution. Superheroes these days have a snaker relationship to authorities. The job of resolving irrationalities of the mundane world is getting tough, even for superheroes.

Dorfman also makes cultural distinctions. His comparison of the unenviable, powerless image of childhood in the Babar books with that of the Disney comics, where the innocents hold all the cards, is a cross-cultural mini-essay. The distinctions also explain why Babar is strictly for kids, while Disney's ducks are for "children of all ages." He also speculates on the difference to a superhero's image once it's exported. To a Third Worlder, he charges, the superhero carries an authoritarian-father air of an outsider laying down the law, while at home he's more like an omnipotent Mr. Fixit.

It is easy, given Dorfman's style, to disagree—no one will find all of Dorfman's arguments convincing. But they are stimulating. His personal style also lets Dorfman frankly explain his investment in his work. "The enemy is inside, and we find it hard to distinguish him from some of our innermost thoughts," he writes. But "there is in men and women a deep refusal to be manipulated. We have in ourselves intimations of another humanity." And, he says, we have our children, who we must enable "stubbornly to reinterpret reality."

#### Lost and found.

In one aside, Dorfman draws a contrast between our contemporary high-culture art of alienation, which stresses contradictions and powerlessness, and pop culture products full of hyperactive individuals who abolish contradictions. *Widows* is one attempt to find a middle ground. It is a deceptively slight piece of fiction that takes as its subject a phenomenon so horrifying and so pervasive that most of us simply don't think about it: the daily, weekly, monthly, yearly disappearance of ordinary citizens in nations with oppressive regimes.

*Widow's* framework stresses its cross-cultural significance. To

sneak the novel past Chilean censors Dorfman wrote it under a pseudonym, setting it in Greece and pretending it was the long lost manuscript of a Danish resistance fighter. But gradually the fiction became so integral a part of the work that even when he decided to publish it under his own name he kept it.

The story is simple: a body is discovered in a river. First one village woman—the village is desolate of men after years of partisan warfare—then several and finally 37 women all claim the body as a relative of theirs. The authorities are first puzzled, then angry. They talk to a priest; a journalist arrives. They seize the original troublemaker, then her grandson. They release one of the disappeared men, trying to prove that the women, so convinced their men are dead, are wrong. They lean on the services of a local peasant who has be-



come the landowner's stooge. But they continue to confront the intransigence of the women, who can be killed but not denied.

It may be a simple tale, but it is not simply told nor simply digested. For one thing, the characters refuse to stay safely archetypal. The women's obduracy can be cruel, even inhumane, while the military men can be found guard-

ing their family snapshots like private wounds. The painfully inarticulate love affair of the landowner's stooge reveals the same insecurity and defensive *machismo* that peasant poverty engendered in him and that his military associations foster.

The language intermittently departs from transparent narrative as if it had been seized by the

IN THESE TIMES JUNE 29-JULY 12, 1983 19 characters, who sometimes infuse it with a vivid poetry (a reminder, by the way, that Dorfman is also a poet). A young girl describes her mother "not knowing what to do with her feelings, dead birds I thought in spite of myself I thought of dead birds trying to fly that couldn't get out of Mama's eyes, the hot rain of her body building up between her legs...."

It is a novel one is tempted to read aloud, and to read slowly, and to read again.

The story both transcends its setting and also explores it intensely. This is not one person's story or a dramatization of an issue, but the texture of experience—a tale that has all the fiber of social relationships—between the military men and the women, between parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants.

Dorfman's work is of special interest to citizens of the First World, so used to either lecturing or being harangued at. In *The Empire's Old Clothes*, he has made it clear the ways in which we make it easy for ourselves to forget there are complete human beings anywhere else. In *Widows* he has made it impossible to deny.

*Dorfman's novel Widows is a simple tale, but it is not simply told nor simply digested. Its subject is horrifying: the daily disappearances of citizens in many countries.*



Marcelo Montecino

out of the center stage, but they are the producers, and therefore to reach them, to talk to them is a central question for all Latin American intellectuals. On the other hand, you cannot but write from your tradition, from your sophistication and education. You can't run away from it or make believe it doesn't exist.

*The notion of childhood takes on several meanings in your essays.* Childhood is a flexible concept. We use children constantly as a way of looking on ourselves, because they supposedly can be modelled into anything. There are characteristics everyone agrees children have—innocence, helplessness, defenselessness. In order to cope with people in the Third World and also with minorities and oppressed people within your own society, you create an image of them as if they were children. You take the idea that they are "underdeveloped" and you say that they have to grow up, to become like us.

*Many of the products you analyze have been overtaken in popularity today by products like video games and TV shows.*

I was looking at the formative influence on American consciousness in this century. The people who first read the Hardy Boys and Disney and the *Reader's Digest* and the Lone Ranger were born in the teens and '20s and they are the ones who have shaped the country today.

I'm not trying to describe current consciousness. The culture is not a one-way street, it's like a city. It's got all sorts of avenues going and coming. What I wanted to do was to look at the strain that appeared 50 and 60 years ago and see how it has grown. I think that culture is in crisis today.

*You argue that these cultural products are all answering a fundamental rebelliousness.*

I write from that vision and that faith—that we are rebels, that we can stand on our own. If these values, these comics, these products were to have dominated us totally we would have stopped being men and women. But most of the people alive today believe in the future, in their kids, in love. They believe they can make a difference.

The reason I am so appalled at mass culture is because I think it takes the best thing—this optimism, this faith, this common sense—and uses it for the worst purposes. Instead of using all this to change the world, it uses it to keep the world as it is. And the way the world is is a mess.

*How has being in exile conditioned your art?*

Exile makes you re-examine your presuppositions, makes you look at things that once were stable in your world—as stable as your geography—and look at them again. The distance kills you, but

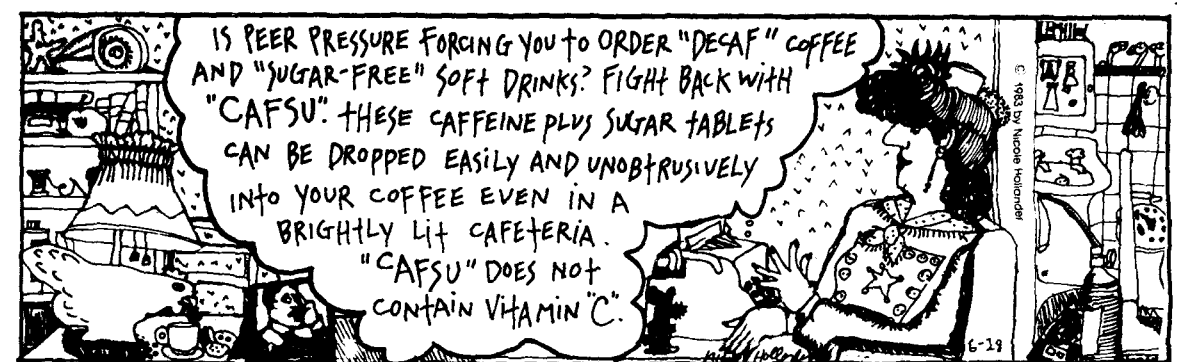
it also fertilizes you. In exile you are forced to recreate culture. You are forced to surround yourself with it as a weapon and a defense.

There's another sense of exile. We have been cast out and we have been cast into silence. Silence is the ultimate punishment; for this to happen to a writer is the most ironic of punishments. For two years I didn't write; I was silenced by the amount of death inside me. Then it became a kind of therapy, a way to turn something negative into something positive.

I am obsessed by the problem of the missing. I think that behind the idea of missing people is more than just the suffering. There are whole continents that are missing—Africa, Latin America—whose humanity I am trying to bring into literature. And personally, I am missing something—I have been bereaved of a country. I think I have written that loss into my novel. I had to look into a mirror to do it. I probably would have written a very realistic novel if I had written it in Chile. Exile made me write a testimony, but also an allegory.

## Sylvia

by Nicole Hollander





# ART & ENTERTAINMENT



Paul Chase

## DOCUMENTARIES

### A day in the cause of life

By Myles Gordon

For the one million people who were there, the size and diversity of the June 12, 1982, New York disarmament rally made just being part of the largest demonstration in U.S. history a unique experience for each of them. In at-

tempting an "official" documentary of the "celebration of life" that took over New York last June, *In Our Hands* faces an impossible task.

Forty-two film crews—350 people, almost all volunteers—worked on this year-long effort that premiered in New York on the rally's first anniversary. (The

premiere was a benefit for the March For Jobs and Peace in Washington August 27—the 20th anniversary of the civil rights march on Washington.) Rally media coordinator Nina Streich calls the film the "most incredible volunteer effort probably in the history of filmmaking," sort of an extension of the rally itself

—and it shows problems of coordination and organization inherent in its subject. The sound quality varies, with the people interviewed often losing out to the rally's giant speaker system.

The film is weakest in its "obligatory" scenes: segments of speeches accurately presented as even more uninspiring than typical rally fare; and musical clips like James Taylor's "You've Got a Friend" presented along with shots of caressing young couples that recall scenes from *Woodstock* (although Holly Near's inspired rendition of "Singing for Our Lives" strikes just the right note).

But producer Bob Richter says, "The film is not about the performance. The film is not even about June 12. The film is about the great play that is made by everyone in the film, in one form or another, for life."

#### Marching rabbits.

Apart from the anticipation evoked by people setting out at dawn by car and train and converging in awe-inspiring aerial views of the human flood in Manhattan's streets, the life of the film is in its individual vignettes—Bella Abzug's boogying to a gospel group singing on stage; a radio report about "an interesting mix of people" as a street level shot catches the furry feet of a rabbit costume in the line of marchers; and the many gigantic, fantastic puppets outside the UN, appearing as an exorcism of primeval spirits from that modernist monolith.

Three groups in particular had starring roles—the police, the Hibakusha (Japanese survivors of the atomic bombing) and the children. The police are shown, as they were, supportive of the

march (one even has "PEACE" on his badge—that's his name). The Hibakusha are the conscience of the march. Some of the film's most effective moments are the juxtaposition of grainy black and white photos of young Hiroshima victims with shots of the children at the rally, who seem to be everywhere. The most comic moments are away from the main rally at the "Inter-

*The life of the film is in its individual vignettes—Bella Abzug boogying to a gospel group on stage, for instance.*

national Children's Park" where a bearded Dr. Benjamin Spock implores uncomprehending youngsters to write to Reagan and tell him "We don't want war." Yet the kids are transfixed as they join Pete Seeger singing "If we intend to live then it's the bomb that has to die."

A mother prompts her child to say "No Nukes" for the camera. All that comes out is a resounding "No...!" In turning "no" into a positive statement, in showing rejection of the arms race as evidence of a self-conscious human faith, *In Our Hands* is true to the spirit of the event it portrays.

## TELEVISION

### Union drama misses workers

By Dan La Botz

*Blood Feud*, a made-for-TV movie now being seen on various stations across the country, takes a look at the former Teamster leader Jimmy Hoffa and his fight with Robert F. Kennedy. But the film fails for reasons that have to do with history, aesthetics and

the relation between the two.

*Blood Feud* portrays the powerful personalities and personal quirks of Hoffa (Robert Blake) and Robert F. Kennedy (Cotter Smith), which is entirely appropriate to a movie about the Teamsters. In the late '50s and early '60s, Kennedy's investigation into the corruption in Hoffa's Teamsters union often made headlines and the nightly news.

Their personal encounters and confrontations—such as when the two of them shouted at each other after a congressional committee hearing—were an important part of the story, especially since this is how the American people saw it on TV at the time. Hoffa's obsession with keeping in shape—doing push-ups and shadow boxing while conducting union business—tells us a lot about the man and his origins. The same with Kennedy's apparently unselfconscious arrogance and self-righteousness.

The problem is that a dramatic explanation of the power of these personalities is missing. The trouble with *Blood Feud* isn't so much with what's there as with what's not. We never see the social conditions that shaped these men.

This is a problem with Hoffa particularly, who became what he was as a result of representing



Jimmy Hoffa and Robert Kennedy at a 1975 Senate committee hearing on union racketeering.

a million workers in the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. The conflict with Kennedy was as much a result of his efforts to win a single national labor contract for drivers and dock workers as it was a result of union corruption.

In the film, Robert F. Kennedy says to Hoffa, "Is the ultimate dream of a national contract to hold this whole country ransom? No man should have that much power."

In a later scene Hoffa tells the members of Detroit Local 299, "He [Kennedy] is scared of you, of the power you'll have with a national contract.... He wants someone who'll side with the bosses, who'll side with the Ken-

neds." While not the whole story, there's a good deal of truth to what Hoffa said.

The conflict between Hoffa and Kennedy wasn't just a conflict between personalities, and it wasn't only over the issue of corruption. It was also a conflict between a union and the government. Missing from *Blood Feud* are the men and women who made up the union. Without them, the main characters in this drama tend to become caricatures, because the social forces they represented and expressed aren't there to give them life.

*F.I.S.T.*, another film about Hoffa and the Teamsters, written by Joe Eszterhas and Sylvester Stallone, offered better drama

and better history—even though it took more liberties with the facts. It showed the workers as real people who built the union and some who fought against its corruption.

*Blood Feud* concentrates on personalities to the exclusion of social forces. Robert Blake as Hoffa and Cotter Smith as Kennedy appear as little more than working-class machismo and upper-class elitism writ large. The real drama of the Teamster's history has been turned into a movie that is neither dramatically successful nor historically convincing.

Dan La Botz, a former truck driver, has been active in union reform campaigns.

Photographer unknown



## MOVIES

# Games people play (kaboom!)

By Pat Aufderheide

*War Games* is the perfect oxymoron—a Hollywood message movie. (If this isn't this summer's hit, then I'll eat my Darth Vader doll.) But it also may be the most persuasive antinuclear movie ever made for Americans. This is the movie that IPC productions (*China Syndrome*, *Roll-over*) keeps meaning to make, the movie that the mass culture critics tell us can't be made, the movie that carries a strong humanist message with populist humor and keeps you on the edge of your seat with stuff that could be *right out of your life*.

But don't tell anyone. Director John Badham is worried that people will go around calling it an antinuke movie. He knows how we all feel about message movies. "It's a sure way to keep people out of the theater," he said in *American Film*. "Actually, the picture is about computers, and nuclear war is a bit of a MacGuffin [the gimmick that triggers the plot]."

Badham may have found the secret to making an entertaining "popcorn" movie that also makes a comment on social issues. The danger that infuses the movie and trips the gags and action in each sequence isn't a particular horror—say, pushing the button for World War III—but a whole way of life, a way of doing things that makes the likelihood of World War III so high.

To use Badham's words, "A lot of the picture is about the ability of technology to take over lives, so the tail is wagging the dog, us being the dog. And the tail is going to wag us right out the window."

You've heard the basic plot, unless you've been out of range of a TV set recently (MGM-UA is convinced *War Games* will be its summer moneymaker, and is blasting the country with ads). A computer whiz kid (Matt Broderick) trying to crack into a video game company's files accidentally gets into the military's most secret computer and triggers the countdown to nuclear war. With the help of his freshfaced girlfriend Jennifer (Ally Sheedy) and a mad professor (John Wood), he undertakes the job of convincing the FBI, the military and even the computer that the whole thing is only a game.

Worse yet, it's a silly game because no one can win. Or, as the professor puts it, "There is a time when you should give up." Sound unAmerican? Not really, says the professor, who looks like Dr. Who without the scarf. Consider why you gave up playing tic-tac-toe—once you know how to play, no one can win. It's boring. Global thermonuclear war is the same thing, only bigger. Much bigger.

## Mr. Nice Guy.

This populist storytelling makes a fit successor to *Bingo Long and the Travelling All-Stars and Motor Kings*, an unjustly neglected movie Badham made in 1976 about the last days of black baseball barnstorming. (He also directed *Saturday Night Fever*, call-

ed in on a rescue mission; and *Whose Life Is It, Anyway?*, which he took on as a labor of love. His other current film is *Blue Thunder*, another movie that raises warning flags about technology.) Badham is known in Hollywood as Mr. Nice Guy, a dependable troubleshooter you call in when the movie's in trouble. But he also has something to say about the way we live now. *War Games*, whose script he completely rewrote when he came into the film two weeks into production, is solid evidence that he can use familiar genres and setups in new ways, if given the chance.

He may get more chances soon—*War Games* is even getting international acclaim, having been chosen to screen at Cannes in the same favored spot that *E.T.* took last year. Like *E.T.*, it uses that classic theme: "and a child shall lead them." It's a favorite theme for Americans, who in comics and classics portray kids as carrying the energizing force of innocence into every new frontier. For us, maturity has a certain stigma—a dulling of the edge of Yankee ingenuity, a taming of the pioneer spirit, a domestication of the lone hero.

In *E.T.*, the youngest kid is the guardian of love and curiosity, up against those big grown-up guys with keys on their belts and distrust in their eyes. There's an abyss between the adult and the kid-cum-spaceman worlds—the adults are the real aliens.

## Computer jocks.

Not so in *War Games*. This is a kid who likes to play just like the adults do. He gets along fine with the computer jocks, those quirky and unsocialized technicians who operate the sacred machinery of our culture. He plays the same game that the president of the U.S. plays.

When the truth first dawns on him, David asks the computer, "Is this a game or is it real?" The computer squawks, "What's the difference?" The computer isn't the only one confused. The kids are glued to their combat video games in the pizza parlor, but at the same time military men are avidly watching their huge display screens in the war room.

This may be the funniest version of the countdown to extinction since the pay-phone scene in *Dr. Strangelove*. (It's gone one better here; this year's hero knows how to hotwire a pay-phone with a pop-top metal tab). The problem isn't bad guys vs. good guys. This is a thriller without villains, just people caught up in a game that plays with them. The adults aren't aliens to the kids, although they may sometimes be obtuse. They aren't even evil to each other, just predictably self-centered.

Never has the human factor looked so suburbanly, ordinarily human. The FBI man on his way to grill David pulls out a little squirt of mouthwash spray; a security guard is too busy romancing the nurse to notice David rewiring his electronic security system. The low-level workers at



*"Do you know this makes me look like an idiot," screams an executive aide as nuclear hell is about to break loose.*

the nerve center of war ponder the price of marijuana and the best way to cultivate a moustache. The high-level ones are more worried about their careers than the future of the planet. "Do you know this makes me look like an idiot in front of the president?" screams an executive aide as nuclear hell is about to break loose.

If people aren't very good machines, neither are the machines. (Maybe that's one reason the Pentagon cut off the film crew's access to their military hardware once they read the script.) Elaborate security systems can be cracked, and signal lights sometimes don't work. ("Just give it a thunk with your finger," says one operator to an-

other. Shades of Three Mile Island, where everyone thought warning signals were just another screw-up on the electrical circuit.)

The game is a lot bigger than the one going on in the war room. All of modern life—at home, at school, at work—has been inscribed on silicon chips, and children of all ages can play. The kid not only has a computer terminal in his bedroom, he also looks up references on microfilm, checks video cassettes out from the library, lives off fast food churned out by automata and keeps time on his digital watch.

The movie's plot spins out on the backs of jokey scenes. My own favorite is when the computer chief hastily removes his gum before entering a meeting, giving it to his secretary—who, ever the obedient servant, pops it into her mouth.

But the jokey set-ups don't come at the expense of the middle Americans, even if it is their foibles that could cost us the globe. There is a throwaway moment in *War Games* that, as eloquently as any dire death statistic, suggests what is at stake when adults play video games with the planet. At dinner, David's dad grabs a piece of white bread and meticulously butters it, then rolls his cob of corn in it and discards the bread. A small moment, a ridiculous personal habit—and a quirky assertion of the little routines of domestic life that all go blooey when the game turns real.

No wonder the movie brings its message home so persuasively. It doesn't point a finger of blame; it gives you a good humored poke in the ribs, though. The wisdom the innocent child has to offer adults is simple: *grow up*, before it's too late. ■

## FILM CLIPS

### Enough to Share: A Portrait of Koinonia Farm

In *Enough to Share*, Atlanta filmmaker Gayla Jamison journeys into a south Georgia Christian community that has survived as a model of idealistic fellowship and social commitment for more than 40 years.

Since Clarence Jordan founded the farm in 1942 after a stint in divinity school, the struggle to live off the land in accordance with Christian principles has not been easy, even in the Bible Belt, because along with Koinonia's commitment to nonviolence and sharing has gone a desire to end poverty and social inequality.

Since the word commune was often used by members of Koinonia, there was repeated baiting throughout the '50s. And when the first blacks began openly to live and work on the farm, the Ku Klux Klan threatened and harassed the members of Koinonia. By the '70s, when the group began building and selling low-priced housing to their poorer neighbors, local businesses attempted to boycott the farm's products to put a stop to their activity.

At the core of this film is a passionate speech by Jordan recorded at a St. Louis church in 1957 during one of Koinonia's darkest hours that reveals the dedication that has kept the 150-member community together. "How could we let these

people chase us from our land, this land we nurtured into life from dust? Selling out would be tantamount to selling our mother." *Ideas and Images, Inc., 1144 Euclid Ave., NE, Atlanta, GA 30307.* **MP**

### Foreclosure

In western Minnesota near the town of Milan, a long-time productive farm family was threatened with foreclosure in 1982. Virtually the whole community (427) rallied behind them. A Twin Cities filmmaker, Jim Gambone, helped interview the couple for a PBS documentary. The woman, it turned out, was head of Milan's Community Education program. As a result, Gambone and her program co-sponsored a dramatic film about foreclosures—in which 350 of Milan's residents helped sew, paint, cook and, most importantly, act—for a re-enactment of a 1930s penny auction (see *ITT*, Oct 6, 1982).

Lovingly photographed, the film successfully lauds the slow persistence of rural resistance. The local cast, including the son of the couple, proves that amateurs can be compelling actors. Highlighting the cast is 74-year-old Clint Haraldson—who in real life witnessed the penny auctions of the last Depression. An excellent resource for local TV or showings at meetings, *Foreclosure* keeps an important chapter of history alive: the auctions really did happen this way. 20 min.

Color. *Community Access to Media, 2524 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis, MN. (612) 377-4215.* **KM**

### Miles to Go

*Miles to Go* is an exceptional feature documentary (produced by Deborah Boldt) that records what happens when women undertake the kind of adventure traditionally reserved to men. Eight not-very-outdoorsy women, who for widely diverse reasons have decided to test themselves, go on a wilderness expedition. Having tested their courage in rock-climbing, they try their skills at map reading in the woods and end up lost for two days. The camera goes along, capturing crisis and decision-making among people variously trained to strive for consensus and to resort to authorities. The result is more of a mess than the women can be proud of, but the ordeal is revealing of the struggle to come to terms with responsibility for women today, especially for those who are not self-conscious feminists. The film is entertaining as much for the beauty of the photography and of the region (it was filmed in northern Georgia, where *Deliverance* was) as it is for the richness of the women's personalities. *Maddux-Boldt Productions, 244 W. 72d St., New York, NY 10023. (212) 724-6678.* **PA**

Contributors: Pat Aufderheide, Ken Meter, Michael Perri



# Papers

Continued from page 24

similar subset of members will use that. Conspicuously cool to both ventures are the larger papers—the *Phoenix*, the *Readers*, Phoenix Arizona's *New Times Weekly*—who need neither editorial collaboration nor ad sales clout from the smaller ones.

Roth sees it as a natural division between potential "benefactors and beneficiaries" in the association, and acknowledges a reluctance on the part of the bigger papers to have others "coattail" on their larger circulations and their resources. Those papers, he says, may wind up with their own national advertising syndicate, and he foresees a continued trend toward AAN papers caucusing on issues of common interest and giving up on the idea of association enterprises. His goals as president are a high-quality convention and association newsletter, ventures "everyone can agree on."

On that count AAN members are likely to be happy with his leadership, judging

from the convention he pulled together in Chicago. Normal business workshops were expanded to include a one-day seminar on ad sales management and a comparative financial standards session, and both were well attended. But there was time enough for the convention's real business: speculating about the financial health of each paper and wondering why no-shows—this year the *Boston Phoenix*, *Los Angeles Weekly* and the East Coast *Advocate* chain, all large papers—didn't attend. Did personal obligations, office moving and financial troubles, respectively, really keep those papers' publishers away? Or was it a statement on AAN's importance—or their relations with Roth?

Editorial workshops, more ambitious than most years, offered a chance to glimpse AAN's members' collective and individual editorial identities.

News panelists—*Village Voice* writer turned *New York Daily News* columnist Ken Auletta, former editor of *Liberation* magazine and the *Boston Real Paper*, David Gelber, now with CBS news, and *Quill* magazine editor Ron Dorfman—were critical of all the papers they discussed. Although the notion of objectivity appears to have gone the way of the

earth-is-flat theory among reflective journalists, alternative or not, all three found the papers' reporting frequently one-sided, unconvincing, even unfair.

But in the question-and-answer period, only *Bay Guardian* publisher Bruce Bruggmann would admit to any open political agenda, though others owned up to certain political goals. Gelber challenged the papers' commitment to any political line: "What makes your papers different from a Stalinist paper in a Third World country?" The rhetorical parry might have provoked real debate, but the participants showed no facility in articulating how their papers differed from either the *Militant* or *Time* magazine.

A trend toward chain ownership is obvious within AAN—the *Advocate* chain has always been a small block, but now the *Reader* either wholly owns or has a stake in the Chicago and Los Angeles papers, Washington's *City Paper*, San Francisco's *East Bay Express* and, through royalties and editorial sharing, the *San Diego Reader*. And *Phoenix New Times* just bought Denver's *Westword*. Chain ownership of the alternatives has implications beyond association politics, of course, but within AAN it promises to exacerbate tensions between smaller in-

dependents and the chain publishers—colleagues become competitors, and small, struggling papers face the prospect of selling out or watching the expansionists move in on their market.

In the interest of fairness, I should admit I don't approach these questions without preconceptions. A veteran of the *Santa Barbara News & Review*, I'm frankly biased toward papers that were founded to address issues the establishment press ignores, not to capitalize on a consumer group it's missing. But those questions aside, it's clear that the rest of the media should be assigning business reporters to cover the convention, not lifestyle writers who don't get beyond their surprise at finding entrepreneurs-in-tweeds instead of Birkenstocked counter-culturalists.

Yet the persistence of the radical stereotype indicates the enduring importance of an independent, crusading press, if only as a cultural myth. Given the dominance of media monopolies moving toward *USA Today*'s freeze-dried format, the alternative papers are about the only space left for issues and writers the mainstream press ignores. We shouldn't abandon our expectations of independence, even occasional radicalism, from them. ■

## CALENDAR

Use the calendar to announce conferences, lectures, films, events, etc. The cost is **\$20.00 for one insertion, \$30.00 for two insertions and \$15.00 for each additional insert**, for copy of 50 words or less (additional words are 50¢ each). Payment must accompany your announcement, and should be sent to the attention of **Both Maschinot**.

### PITTSBURGH, PA

#### Through July 4

Radical Humor Art Show ("bristles off the walls"—*Village Voice*) with work from Europe and the Americas, labor/socialist/communist/feminist/anti-nuke, 1900-present, at the Pittsburgh Filmmakers, Oakland & Forbes Ave., 8:00 p.m. Show runs through July 4. Details, call 321-4767.

### CHICAGO, IL

#### Through August 21

"John Heartfield: Photomontages of the Nazi Period." A prominent German satirist, Heartfield was a pioneer in the technique of photomontage. His gripping political commentary helped to unmask the forces behind Hitler's rise to power. Peace Museum, 364 W. Erie St. Hours: Tues.-Sun. Noon to 5 p.m., Thurs. Noon to 8 p.m. (312) 440-1860.

#### June 30

Guild Books and *In These Times* invite you to hear David Gordon, co-author of *Beyond the Wasteland: A Democratic Alternative to Economic Decline*. Thursday evening at 7:00 p.m. at the offices of *In These Times*, 1300 W. Belmont Ave., 472-5700. No charge.

#### July 2-3

National Conference of the Unemployed at Centro de la Causa, 731 W. 17th St. For more information, contact JOIN, 9271 S. Chicago Ave. 60617, or call (312) 374-6686.

#### July 7

The film *John Heartfield: Photomontagist* will be shown at the Film Center of the School of

the Art Institute at 5:30 and 7:30 p.m., \$3.

### WASHINGTON, DC

#### July 2

Emergency demonstration to stop the U.S. war against Central America and the Caribbean. Get your bus tickets now by contacting: Midwest: Detroit (313) 965-0074, Chicago (312) 427-8038, Pittsburgh (412) 381-1400; Northeast: New York (212) 741-0633, Boston (617) 424-1176, Jersey City (201) 433-2332, Buffalo (716) 881-1525, Rochester (716) 442-1290; Mid-Atlantic: Washington (202) 462-1488, Baltimore (301) 235-7040, Philadelphia (215) 546-9880, ext. 213, Wilmington (302) 995-6962; Southwest: Houston (713) 869-1368. Sponsored by the Ad Hoc Committee for a July 2nd Emergency Mobilization.

### SENECA, NY

#### July 4-September 5

The first U.S. Women's Encampment for a Future Peace and Justice near the Seneca Army Depot in upstate New York will begin July 4 and continue until September 5. Women will leaflet, vigil, hold workshops and have cultural events. A major civil disobedience action against the Cruise and Pershing II missiles deployment in Europe is planned for August 1. For more info, call: (212) 505-8493 or write Seneca Encampment, 339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012.

### NEW ROCHELLE, NY

#### July 7-10

Clergy and Laity Concerned National Conference. "We Still Have a Dream: Jobs, Peace and Freedom—A Look at the Class System in the U.S." College of New Rochelle, N.Y. For information: CALC, 198 Broadway, New York, NY 10038. (212) 964-6730.

### INTERNATIONAL

#### July 7-August 6

Bike for Peace from Moscow to D.C. Dinner in

honor of bicyclists in Washington on August 6. Tickets: \$40. For information on bike tour or dinner, contact Christopher Senie, Box 750 Westport, CT 06881. (203) 226-1223.

### LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE, NH

#### July 16-23

"Reshaping the American Dream: Perspectives on the U.S. Political and Economic System" is the theme of the American Friends Service Committee's 1983 Avon Institute. Resource persons include: Teresa Amott, Tom Andrews, Beryl Banfield, George and Helen Bliss, Angie Berryman, Cushing Dolbeare, Frank Wilkinson and more. Excellent children's and teens' programs. Brochure from AFSC, 2161 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02140. (617) 661-6130.

### CHENEY, WA

#### July 24-26

8th Annual National Institute on Social Work in Rural Areas: "The Future of Rural Communities: Preservation and Change." Topics include: family therapy, rape and family violence, cross-cultural social work, women's issues, innovative service delivery programs and education in remote rural areas. Over 50 workshops and presentations by participants from almost all states in the U.S. and most provinces in Canada. For information, contact: Jim Pippard, Inland Empire School of Social Work and Human Services, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA 99004. (509) 359-6480.

### SAN FRANCISCO, CA

#### July 30

Bay Area Radical Therapy Community is sponsoring a West Coast Conference on "The Politics of Therapy and the Therapy of Politics"—an event bringing together community activists and progressive therapists to share skills and participate in panel discussions, small problem-solving groups and workshops. 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at

McLaren Hall, University of San Francisco (on Golden Gate between Masonic and Parker). For information call or write: Cooperation Corporation, 812 Clayton St., San Francisco, CA 94117. (415) 681-1158. Pre-registration is \$10-\$20, \$10 low income.

### AMHERST, MA

#### July 31-August 6, August 14-20

Center for Popular Economics: Summer Institute—week-long course in popular economics for activists in labor and peace groups; tenants' minority, religious and women's organizations; the environmental movement, and other progressive groups. No previous economics training expected. \$220-440. Scholarships available. Box 785, Amherst, MA 01004, (413) 545-0743.

### ISRAEL

#### August 6-21

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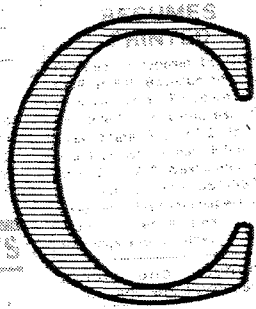
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# TYPECASTING

by JOAN WALSH



ALVIN TRILLIN hurt a lot of people's feelings when, after attending an alternative newsweeklies convention in Seattle in 1978, he wrote a bemused *New Yorker* column wondering exactly what distinguished the convention-goers from their establishment counterparts. The decidedly respectable group balked at calling itself alternative, he noted—it was christened the National Association of Newsweeklies, and only after impassioned speeches by I.F. Stone and Alexander Cockburn at the 1979 convention was the word "alternative" added to the name. Comparing the Seattle gathering to a 1972 underground press convention where politics, not demographics, had dominated the discussions, Trillin didn't seem impressed by the obsession with the respectability that had succeeded radical papers' rhetorical excess.

Since then reporters and other observers at the newsweeklies' annual convention have made an issue of the association's "upscale demographics," to use its own terms: the preponderance of well-heeled white males, the emphasis on financial success over editorial accomplishments and the often lavish convention accommodations. Yet the ironies pointed at by the media are mostly contrived. Few of today's alternative publishers are radicals-gone-respectable; their papers mostly began as clear-headed business ventures that succeeded the underground press with a conviction that whatever they were, they weren't...that.

Today the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies (AAN) represents an industry, not a political institution. But even that generalization is hard to make about a group that encompasses the left-leaning, news-oriented *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, Boston's formidable *Phoenix*, the features-and-entertainment papers of the Chicago-based *Reader* empire, and the still collectively-owned-and-operated *Santa Barbara News & Review*. Despite the diversity, cooperation has tended to triumph over conflict in the organization's five years of existence. This year's convention in early June, for instance, saw the unanimous election of Chicago *Reader* publisher Bob Roth as AAN president. Roth's nomination was seconded by his association antagonist Mark Hopp, publisher of the *Twin Cities Reader* (no formal relation) and respondent in a trademark lawsuit Roth filed. The election seemed the culmination of consensus.

And they all lived happily ever after?

Not likely. Unity prevailed at the convention, but at the mid-year AAN board meeting in January Roth was threatening to pull the papers he controls out of the association in a dispute over a national advertising representative. Although that split was averted, divisions based on politics, economics and professional rivalries—thus far patched over by common self-interest—can't help but widen. As the AAN more clearly defines itself, common ground may become increasingly scarce.

AAN was founded to foster professional camaraderie, industry recognition, some sort of editorial cooperation and national advertising, not necessarily in that order. Despite ideological differences, its members share at least one conviction—that whether the goal is exposing fraud in defense contracting or publishing the most widely read guide to sushi bars, financial stability is a prerequisite of success.

But from the beginning, joint ventures among AAN newspapers have been hard to promote. Consider the flap—that almost was over the national advertising representative. An AAN goal since its founding, national ads can mean the difference between financial success and mere subsistence to many of the newsweeklies, and countless efforts have been made to seduce cigarette, liquor, auto and airplane companies into their pages. More than two-thirds of the AAN papers have found a skilled matchmaker in Bill Scott, a veteran of late AAN members, the *Boston Real Paper* and *Soho Weekly News*. Now head of City Newsweeklies ad agency, Scott has placed thousands of dollars of ads, mostly for cigarettes, in AAN papers since the firm started in 1982.

Scott wanted to seek designation as exclusive AAN sales rep at the June convention, arguing that selling the association as a package with more than a million readers, instead of small individual papers, would attract more national ads—long a premise of the association. But Roth opposed it at the board meeting in January because City Newsweeklies is owned by *Twin Cities Reader* publisher Mark Hopp. Hopp is best known for firing a music critic who noted the irony in *Reader* advertiser Kool cigarettes sponsoring jazz festivals, given the high incidence of lung cancer among jazz greats (and less well-known for using the *Reader* name without paying Roth royalties, the subject of the aforementioned lawsuit). Representation by a Hopp-owned firm, considering his subservience to cigarette advertisers, would compromise AAN be-

yond all professional credibility, Roth argued; he and his newspapers would be forced to leave the group.

It seems a sticky question: which does one ignore—Hopp's toadying to advertisers or Roth's self-interest in forcing the issue (the Chicago *Reader*, it should be noted, has less trouble getting cigarette ads on its own than most of Scott's clients). But the board went with Roth, and City Newsweeklies settled for hosting a well-attended hospitality suite at the convention that was widely credited for attracting dozens of non-AAN member papers to the weekend meeting. Lest any of his clients were swayed by Roth's ethical reasoning, Scott showed up at the convention's opening night cocktail party with payments from advertisers and, with a great show of discretion, handed them out.

Divisions over editorial cooperation among AAN members have been less flamboyant, but they've helped stall joint projects just the same. Given the papers' political diversity, disagreement over a formal editorial network is natural. But here, too, economics plays a role. An AAN syndicate has been frankly proposed as a way for smaller papers to get quality copy into their pages that they couldn't otherwise afford, whether it be dispatches from El Salvador or a guide to home computers. But proposals for jointly funded editorial projects have been unpopular with the large papers, which are unwilling to help pay for shared copy when they can afford exclusive articles whose political slant and local focus they control. Thus, up to now AAN editorial projects have been the work of a handful of editors who took it upon themselves to collaborate on investigative stories and mail them out to the membership.

A compromise editorial plan would establish a non-profit foundation to fund articles through charitable donations along with small contributions from AAN papers—but only those using the service. AAN dues have gone to investigate setting up the venture, but if established it would be financially independent. At the June convention, the proposal—pushed hardest by Alan Kay of the *Bay Guardian* and Nat Winthrop of the *Vermont Vanguard Press*—needed 12 votes for adoption, and got 13.

A single association advertising front, or a joint editorial syndicate, appear to be ideas whose time has passed. Instead, two-thirds of the papers are City Newsweeklies clients, and once an editorial project gets off the ground, perhaps a

Continued on page 22

Alternative papers  
confront a late-breaking  
identity crisis.

Film

THURS 2

In Focus

JOE NA  
A treatise on publ  
BY DENNIS SCHAPIRO  
was doing eve  
for 2